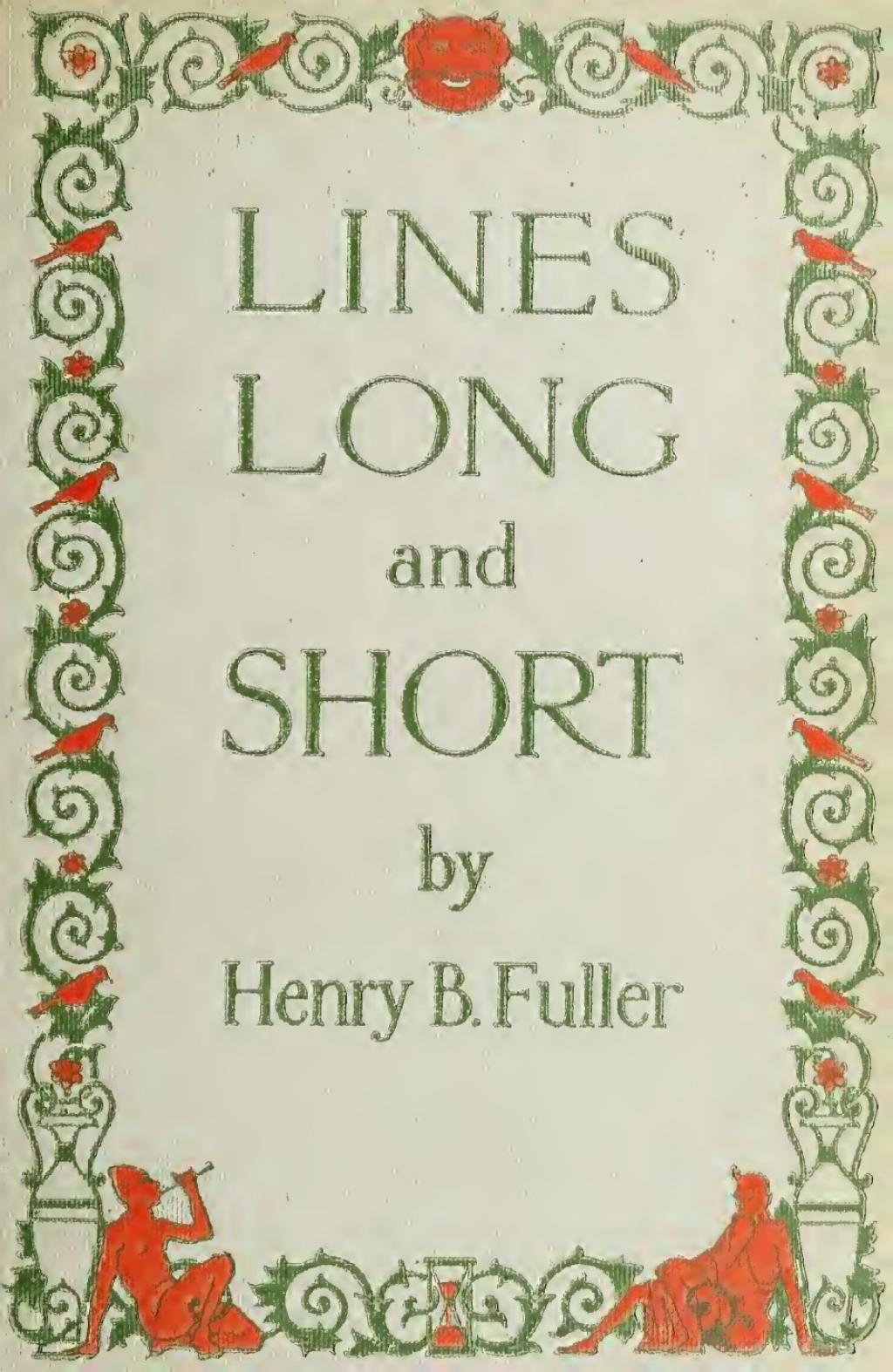


LINES  
LONG  
and  
SHORT  
by  
Henry B. Fuller



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## **LINES LONG AND SHORT**



# LINES LONG AND SHORT

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES IN  
VARIOUS RHYTHMS

BY

HENRY B. FULLER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
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1917

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

A FEW of the present pieces already have been printed.  
For their reappearance here I am indebted to *Poetry*, the  
*Chicago Tribune*, and the *New Republic*.



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## **LINES LONG AND SHORT**



## TOBIAS HOLT, BACHELOR

AT twenty  
Holt seemed like other chaps  
In his own set and circle:  
He waltzed and redowa'd,  
Was handy-brisk at picnics,  
Took all the girls on buggy-rides,  
Ushered at weddings —  
In short, was generally popular.

At twenty-eight,  
Though long regarded as a "catch,"  
He was still single;  
Had ushered all his chums and pals  
Into the married state,  
But stopped outside himself.  
Some said he had no enterprise, no spunk;  
Others thought he could see no individual girl  
Among the crowd, — the forest hid the trees;  
And others still declared  
That what he really preferred to be  
Was Little Brother to the Whole Wide World.

This last guess was nearest of the three;  
Holt was simply — kind.  
His little "life ideal" was just this:  
To be in pleasant, comfortable circumstances himself

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

(No scansion whatsoever, there!);  
To "go" with others similarly placed;  
To do these others various little favors,  
Kindnesses, obliging turns,  
And to make life, within such narrowed limits,  
A "nice" and friendly thing.  
No passion; no vicissitudes;  
Good-will all round.  
Does such a spirit  
Help move the real world on?  
Well, perhaps not.

Now, as a bachelor in his thirties,  
Holt made the rounds:  
Dined with married friends,  
Brought presents for their children,  
And in the case of couples six months wed,  
And facing their first sag,  
Jumped in the threatening breach and pulled  
them through.  
He had the run of several pleasant homes,  
And Mrs. C. H. Mack,  
Whom he had often taken  
To parties and on buggy-rides,  
Always invited him to dinner  
On Thanksgiving Day.

As he neared fifty,  
The various welcomes  
Grew more sedate;

## TOBIAS HOLT, BACHELOR

Some, even cool.  
Folks had their own concerns, perhaps;  
And then, again,  
His youthful charm — this is just possible —  
Had become impaired.  
And one November  
The invitation for Thanksgiving  
Did not come.  
Panic! — no less.  
But it turned out  
Alicia Mack had not forgotten:  
Sickness in the house.  
Heaven be blessed! —  
Henceforward a new lease of life,  
With doubled works of friendliness and zeal,  
And yet — what might the future bring from  
others?  
So, a high resolve to gird him,  
To hold the slipping ground,  
And last through to the end.

Daily Holt became  
More strenuous, more assiduous:  
The sliding clutch must stick.  
More calls, more flowers, more loans of books,  
More friendly offices,  
More theater-parties for married pairs,  
More jokes and funny stories  
Laboriously rehearsed and sprung.  
He learned the two-step:

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Young girls would dance with him  
When younger partners failed,  
And, if the daughters of his early friends,  
Would call him "Uncle Toby."  
And gay young dogs,  
Who'd not yet learned the latest step,  
But meant to,  
Would snicker on the outskirts:  
Tail-Holt, they'd say, was better Holt than  
none!

He kept the run of birthdays,  
And of anniversaries  
Husbands themselves forgot.  
And one December,  
When fate had been adverse,  
He set aside all notion  
Of a new business-suit  
And put the money saved  
Into a round of presents.  
"Not much," people might say,  
On opening their parcels;  
"But, anyway, he's not forgotten us  
Completely." Thus he'd arrange  
A welcome, not too chill,  
For one year more.

Holt, at sixty-five,  
Was finding life still busy  
But rather bleak;

## TOBIAS HOLT, BACHELOR

And one day he lay down in bed,  
A bachelor in a boarding-house,  
To think about it.  
Next day the doctor came. . . .  
Well, now,  
Shall I be brusque, or sentimental?  
Communicative, or quite mute,  
Leaving it all to you?  
Did he get well, or die?  
Did people rally, or remain away?  
Dear reader, you shall have it as you choose.

Did fellows at the clubs say, "H'm!"  
And keep their chairs?  
Did a wide circle read about his death  
Only to say, "Well! well!";  
And did the office satisfy itself  
With a ten-dollar wreath?

Or did a wave of general kindness —  
Equivalent for all the little waves  
Himself had set in motion —  
Gather impetus  
And waft him out  
On the Great Sea?  
Did Alicia Mack,  
Or others of that early coterie,  
Come to his doleful room  
With sympathy and flowers  
(And even, mayhap,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A favorite grandchild  
To clamber on his bed),  
Showing a friendly tear in worldly eyes?  
Did far-back chums sit down beside his pillow,  
Sucking their cane-heads, saying:  
“Cheer up, old chap; you’re coming through  
all right!”?

Yes, perhaps he did  
Come through all right —  
With much or little sympathy —  
To take up, with what zest he could,  
The frantic rôle  
Of buying favors from a cooling world.  
Spend as you will,  
It’s sad to be old, and alone.  
(Fudge! that’s the very thing  
I tried hard not to say!)

## RIGMAROLE

THE word's undignified, I know,  
And does n't even say quite what I mean.  
My meaning is approximately this:  
The turning back of things  
On their own selves,  
To take another start.  
“Eternal recurrence” might be made to do,  
Save for the rumbling, stumbling *r*'s.  
“Everlasting return,” though anapæstic,  
Here seems cacophonous;  
And even “Endless chain” will scarcely serve.

Well, John M. Hart was a professional man,  
Or meant to be,  
And married young — at twenty-four  
(A longish chance, say I).  
Heaven blessed him — if you like:  
At thirty  
He had a little family of three.  
Think what that means: —  
'Mongst many other things,  
Wakeful nights,  
Perambulators on the porch,  
Little tempers, unfolding minds,  
Bills  
(That deadly word shall stand all by itself),

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

And slavery (qualified) for mother  
And father too.  
Through years,  
No leisure, no outings;  
Few books and pleasures;  
Every spare cent put in the Children's Pool.  
Hum!

When the elder boy was ready for high school,  
And the little girl well through kindergarten,  
Freedom (qualified) seemed almost won:  
Husband and wife could take an evening off,  
Or spare the change for an occasional book.  
And then — Hart found himself a widower.  
(A bit too much like blank verse, hereabouts.)  
After a lonely, perplexed year or so,  
Another face was fair, and he again complete.  
(Are Alexandrines better? No.)

Thus, in due course, another brood.  
Then, wakeful nights,  
Perambulators on the porch,  
More little tempers,  
More unfolding minds,  
Bills . . .  
But why repeat?  
Once again, clamps for the purse,  
Crimps for the mind,  
Shrinkage in life's fair opportunities.  
He found himself

## RIGMAROLE

Back in the same old school,  
But with a different seatmate;  
And though so eager and so able  
To enter the next grade,  
Turning the pages back and "taking a review."

And then, in middle life,  
Fate having dealt a second blow,  
He wedded once again.

His older children setting up or settling down,  
His younger past the nursery and off to school,  
Another of Eve's daughters rose to view,  
And her face, too, was fair.

Whence a single child,  
The flower of his old age:  
A novel episode for his young wife,  
A thrice-told tale for him.

One child may work the tyranny of six.  
Hence, wakeful nights,  
Perambulator for the porch  
(Or, rather, vestibule; it was a flathouse, now);  
One more little temper,  
One more unfolding mind,  
Bills . . .  
Yes, the regular rigmarole.  
Shades of the prison-house began to close  
Upon the aging man;  
And he who longed for a post-graduate course  
Found himself set back

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

To matrimony's earlier pages —  
Life's primary pupil still.  
For others wider scope and higher aims;  
For him, 't would seem,  
A meager office and a humdrum home.

One evening,  
After his eldest son and that son's wife  
Had wheeled their first-born to the door  
*In his* perambulator,  
Hart, half-dazed, bestowed a grand-dad's blessing;  
Then, in his "library" (it was n't much),  
He mused, alone:

"Lord, what is MAN?"  
(Should he have "caps" or agate lower case?)  
"Is he protagonist or supernumerary?  
Hero or martyr?  
Nincompoop or sage?  
Why is he here?  
Where from?  
What for — what purpose meant to serve?  
And what the object of this Squirrel-cage —  
This endless Merry-go-round of doubtful joy?  
What issue for this mortal Shoot-the-shoots?  
Where does it all get us?  
How do we link up  
With Seen and Unseen?  
What gain, through all this stir and stew,  
For me — or for Another?

## RIGMAROLE

Why must we poor mortals . . . ?”  
He dozed.  
And if the answer came to him in sleep  
It left him ere he woke:—  
The world’s still dark.

## PATIENCE

SING, muse! —  
But no; that opening's stale.  
I'll sing, myself:  
I'll chant Malvina Shedd,  
Our first highpriestess of gentility.

I've called this odelet "Patience."  
Might as well call it "Faith and Patience";  
Or better still,  
"Faith, Hope, and Patience" —  
That blessed, potent triad  
Which moves the mountain round.

Don't sniff if I've implied  
Malvina was "genteel";  
For this queer word  
Had standing in the 'sixties,  
That epoch when our heroine  
Planted her standard in the Middle West  
And cried, "Ye choice ones, gather round!"

But few there were to answer.  
Almost alone, Malvina,  
A bride just from the East,  
Stood in the void among the ribald many,

## PATIENCE

A “remnant” of just one,  
Playing her little game of Solitaire.

The town itself,  
Purest ramshackle,  
Sprawled in a morass,  
Star-gazing at the future;  
And Horace W. Shedd,  
Then in hides and tallow,  
Gazed with the rest.

He saw things big, and all he saw came true.  
Yet even he could think his wife  
A futile sibyl.

Later, he owned his error.

Malvina first rose full-orbed on the town  
In 'sixty-five, at the Sanitary Fair.  
Her booth, here, was the best of all.  
Early she took the lead and never lost it:  
Next season, no sewing-class for freedmen  
More sought than hers, —  
No front steps,  
In the long summer twilights by the lake,  
More peopled.

The winter following,  
She formed a dancing class —  
A thing so choice that few could qualify.  
She named it “Entre Nous,” or “Nonpareil,”  
Or something of the sort,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

And made kid gloves and swallow-tails  
*De rigueur.*

But soon she fled town mud for rural joys.  
In a new suburb—sort o’—on the prairie’s edge,  
She reared a “villa,” so to speak,  
Within a “shrubbery”;—  
“Iona Lodge” she called it;  
And if you owned a clarence  
You might drive out there Sunday afternoon  
And call.

She next devised  
A Sunday afternoon in town —  
Oh, wickedness!  
Some few bold spirits  
Braved public censure to attend.  
They told of cakes and ices  
Passed by a man in livery,  
The first such creature spied  
Within the corporate limits.  
Where had she got him?  
Doubtless some foreigner — Swiss, maybe.  
“A flunkie!” said the reading public; “faugh!”

And while the general throng  
Still went to Lotta or to “Uncle Tom,”  
Madam put on her ermine cape  
And heard Ristori from a box.  
The dizzied gallery gaped; but the parquet

## PATIENCE

Looked and approved and took our friend  
For social leader, now, past all dispute.

On New Year's day our heroine  
Kept open house.  
Tom came, and Dick, and Harry —  
For now she had a following indeed.  
Tom was all right, and Dick would do;  
But Harry!  
He was so numerous and objectionable!  
And when he grew too many  
And the press complained  
That New Year wine started  
A multitude of youths  
Down to the drunkard's grave,  
Malvina cut things short.  
She was the first  
To hang a ribboned wicker-basket by the front-  
door bell  
And let men drop their cards.  
Other ladies followed:  
For January first  
Exclusive and retired *recueillement*  
Became the mode.

The dancing class had long been dropped:  
Malvina gave a "german"  
In her own new house (or mansion),  
With favors.  
Dozens of young clerks danced till three;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Then at their desks by eight.  
I don't know how they did it, but they did.  
Black headlines, the next morning,  
Told much about the fête,  
But did not tell us that.

Nor did they say  
That in the wee sma' hours  
Malvina lit a cigarette — the first.

Next coup:  
After all this, Malvina went abroad  
To meet the old-world grandeurs face to face.  
Presently word came back  
That told of her at court —  
London, of course; and pretty soon  
*The Elite Herald*  
(This sheet ran weekly for almost a year)  
Pictured her in a court-train  
And ostrich-feathers.  
Enough: that put her foot upon our necks;  
She ruled us ever after.

Thence her first right  
To every passing prince —  
A right she had some time enjoyed  
With passing operatic stars,  
Who sang in her salon.  
(Salon, yes; not drawing-room;  
Parlor, still less.)

## PATIENCE

That was the trouble with the stars:  
Passing; errant, not fixed.  
Brief seasons at this theater or that;  
Troupes from other towns,  
Thrown at us for a fortnight;  
But there still lacked  
An opera of our own,  
With settled places  
For our leaders and our queens.

But let that pass.  
The years went on.  
Malvina, with a great gray pompadour,  
Took on a hyphen; 't was the first in town.  
Malvina Woode-Shedd — thus she signed the notes  
That brought the season's débutantes  
To pour at teas.  
Think ye, young buds,  
That teas, and coming-out, and such-like things  
Have always been in this our burg?  
You do? Just guess again.

After a while a great big yellow hall  
Put a new row of boxes at the back:  
Our own, own op'ra in full bloom at last!  
Malvina, old but strong,  
Seized on the middle box,  
As by a right none could gainsay,  
And there she sat:  
A Faith who had endured through all;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A Prophetess whose fondest words  
Were now come true.

Sound, music! trumpets, blare!  
Ring thro' the vast hall's blaze!  
In one admiring gaze  
Let city's brave and fair  
At great Malvina stare!  
*Loq.* — “View, with due amaze,  
Our tall tiara's rays,  
The gold-spun robe we wear!”

Such scene was, from the start,  
Before her vatic eyes.  
Steadfastness was the key;  
Well has she played her part:  
Band, chorus, public, rise, —  
Greet her with three times three!

A sonnet (narrow width) —  
As you perceive.  
Would it were wider!  
For,  
A gallant, persevering spirit,  
In whatsoever field,  
Earns all the praise  
This grudging world can give.

## ARIDITY

THE world is all before us, where to choose:  
Spoon River or Bird Center,  
Or something in between —  
Nay, that's not so;  
Youth does not choose; age cannot.  
Often the young  
Accept the world-scheme far too readily;  
The older man, if he objects,  
Objects too late; he's lived to find  
The world now woven for him.  
Enmeshed, he can but be  
What he has come to be —  
As here, as here;  
Or, indeed,  
As anywhere.

Well, to begin again:  
The happy man is he  
Who lives by something  
And for that something dies.  
Number One lives, let us say,  
By wife and child,  
And dies for them  
Upon the threshold of the blazing home.  
Number Two lives by his college  
And dies for it upon the gridiron

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Amid the shouts of pleasured thousands.  
Number Three, indulging an odd passion,  
Lives by hoary, violent Rome,  
And dies there, or thereafter,  
Of fever, or malaria  
(I sweep aside all newer thought  
On the mosquito),  
Or sheer homesickness; —  
O Rome, so fair, so old, so far away!  
Number Four —  
Well, Number Four was Benjamin C. Hill,  
And he lived by and died for  
The Merchants' National Tax-Title & Trust Co.

Hill made his début  
By helping to take orders, 'cross a counter,  
For abstracts of title: an uncle found the job.  
The docile boy, mouldable to anything,  
Slid into the place without a question.  
Within a fortnight he was quite at home;  
And soon he saw, beyond mistake,  
His life-road open.  
Thence to law-school at night;  
Then, laureled,  
Back for the remainder of his days  
To snuggle up against the nourishing breast  
Of the Trust Company.

Five decades followed, years  
Of instruments, continuations,

## ARIDITY

Quit-claims, releases, what you will.  
Kinks, kinks, kinks —  
Sometimes he put them in,  
Sometimes he took them out;  
But either, and ever,  
With relish and enjoyment.  
He never rose to be the head of all,  
Yet in his own department  
He was perfect, prized, well-paid.

He frilled the leaves of abstracts all day long;  
Then took them home at night  
And read them in his den.  
Like Descartes, he could say:  
“I think; therefore I am.”  
A new Spinoza, he was drunk  
Not with God, but with God’s footstool.  
Like Herbert Spencer, he could clip close  
Th’ Unknowable —  
(Unknowable to us, but plain to him).  
He knew the city’s spread  
From Rogers Park to Hegewisch,  
And out past Austin:  
Subdivision by subdivision,  
From Original Town  
To last Addition.  
A Simeon Schopenhauer,  
He looked down from his lonely column  
And viewed the world,  
Not as *Wille und Vorstellung*,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

But as sheer Real Estate.  
And he was always making points —  
An Indian fakir on his bed of spikes.

Man (1stly) delighted him not (Shakespeare):  
He saw the Bête Humaine  
(O Zola! O thy chanting choirs!)  
Merely as Grantor and Grantee;  
Nor (2ndly) a dark eye in woman (Byron):  
He married early a pale-pupiled blonde,  
And there it ended;  
Nor (3rdly) childhood's happy laughter (Anybody).  
At home he was only  
The passive background.  
His wife had clubs and causes,  
And made as if they satisfied her.  
His adopted son — or hers —  
Went off to college, much to Hill's relief.  
Thus domesticity slid by the board;  
And so did civics, art, church, charity,  
And all the rest.  
Once he was asked to go  
Before the Tax Commission  
And aid reform.  
But no; that interest, though allied,  
Was not his, quite:  
He kept his special corner.

This corner was retired  
From natural daylight

## ARIDITY

And from outside air,  
And he lived there for years,  
And years:  
The Company was always going to build —  
And never did.  
When he was nearing fifty  
Quarters such as these  
Began to tell:  
His boy, returning home,  
Found him more sapless,  
More jejune, than ever;  
He was drying up.

They pushed him toward the links.  
He sat upon the club-house porch  
And viewed the landscape o'er:  
A spread-out checker-board of quarter-sections  
Beneath a sky  
“Clear” sometimes, sometimes “clouded.”  
And here he amorously eyed  
His pocketful of memos. —  
Such was his exercise.

The years went on —  
Ten, twelve, fifteen.  
He was but a wraith,  
A disembodied intellect.  
He never made complaint,  
Even on his poorest days;  
No protest at the start,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

No protest now.  
For him, one life,  
And he was leading it.  
*He* never longed for alma mater;  
*He* never whined for Rome.  
And then, at sixty-six, the end.  
No hope for a continuation:  
He quit-claimed life;  
And Death, the Great Conveyancer,  
Carried him away.  
Perhaps 't was pernicious anæmia;  
Perhaps, arterial sclerosis;  
Perhaps — Why should we specify?

Heigh-ho!  
Eight ascetic verbalists,  
Drawn from the office, —  
Eight grammarians  
(A reference, properly obscure,  
To Browning), —  
Bore him to the grave.  
Well, well;  
Here ends his abstract and brief chronicle.  
Of course I cannot speak for you;  
But, as for me  
(Despite the consolations of philosophy  
Attempted near the start),  
It makes me rather sad.

## VEILS

Do shadows ever lift completely?  
Why, yes — one might suppose so.  
But this particular shadow; let us see.

I'll make no bid for sympathy  
On behalf of the poor girl  
By saying she was lovely —  
She was not; she had the average looks;  
Or that she was sweet — .  
For she was not; she had the average disposition;  
Or that she was poor — for she was not:  
On the contrary, she (or her father) was rich —  
Flagrantly so. That made the trouble,  
In a way.

He invented, owned, dispensed  
A proprietary medicine.  
Its title and its function  
Were both absurd and just a bit repellent.  
Wide and shrewd publicity had made the name  
A household word throughout the land —  
A by-word too:  
The baser press, the cheaper clubs,  
Made jokes and gibes about it.  
Those of the former were not copied far;  
Those of the latter passed by word of mouth.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Yet a result was reached:  
Effluvium.

From fifteen on to twenty-three —  
Years sensitive —  
Our heroine caught distasteful whiffs.  
High school was cruel,  
College most unkind;  
Society, in certain circles, nudged and snickered.  
Only marriage, with change of name,  
Seemed to hold out promise of relief.

Her parent, sturdy man,  
Could see no reason for this pother.  
What did the silly people mean? —  
Business was business:  
He had gone ahead  
On principles quite proper and approved.  
No thought humanitarian or philanthropic  
Tainted or prejudiced the enterprise.  
His stuff was made to sell —  
Like blankets, bonds or anything;  
The buyer must beware.  
Indeed a closer study of his formula  
Than law exacted  
Would have shown,  
Through the employment of ingredients  
Cheap and deleterious,  
A competence not to be found everywhere.  
Consider, too, his plant,

## VEILS

Increasing in spread and bulk with every year;  
Count up his office force,  
Great and growing constantly;  
Think, too, of his big selling-staff —  
Its wide and ever-widening endeavors.  
It was a business, like any other —  
Save that, where other brought in paltry thousands,  
This brought in millions.

His daughter's foreground was most fair to view,  
For she had everything these millions could buy;  
But in the background spread that horrible *décor*  
Which blighted her young life.  
How many veils, skillfully lowered,  
Would be required to shut it from the sight,  
Eradicate it from the general memory?

She married: a gauzy veil, the first,  
Descended and took away  
Her over-famous name.  
Her husband was too sensible, ambitious, and robust  
To be fastidious;  
He had means himself,  
And used his new connection to make them greater.  
The awful name still stared  
From billboards and electric signs,  
But was no longer hers.

Next went the name itself: a great, grasping trust  
Dropped down a second veil

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Between Madama and the Horror:  
Her father's business became  
But one in a mashed dozen.  
As a separate entity it vanished;  
Its memory faded slowly,  
Like an evil smell.

Shortly her husband died  
And left her more than rich.  
Next, her father, his occupation and identity  
Gone from him, passed on too,  
And all the millions, various and several,  
Were hers alone. She went abroad.  
America might still remember,  
But Europe did not even know.

The second son of an impoverished earl  
Presently dropped another veil, the third.  
Her atmosphere was now  
The soft, dense air of Devon.  
That innocent English country-side,  
Even London's self, was guiltless of offense:  
No clouded hoardings tortured her by day;  
No pillared fires affronted her by night.  
She had escaped at last  
The smarting stigma of her girlhood days.

The elder brother died in undue course;  
The father, too, in due course followed.  
A countess, please you, ere five years.

## VEILS

Places in town and country;  
Well regarded by the great and high;  
Mother of Lord Dashton and the Honourable Guy;  
All going like a charm; and then . . .

Have you been waiting for the words, "and then"?  
I hope not. If you have,  
Learn, ignoble reader, I shall not go so far  
As you expect.  
Would you have me say  
The Trust invaded Britain,  
Again tormenting Lady Blankleigh's eyes?  
Should I tell how girlhood friends,  
Under the stress of social competition,  
Dropped searing words of secret ancient history?  
Or would you prod me up till I record  
How some society journal, flippant and malignant,  
Harped on the hideous theme  
And drove the poor soul frantic?  
Well, I tell you plainly,  
*It simply shall not be!*  
What had she done amiss?  
Why should we persecute her?  
Why irritate her husband, mortify her sons?  
You're ungenerous. *Va via!*

Behind its triple veil,  
In the shimmering, silvery, shadowy distance,  
Coils that odious beast, the Business,  
Within his stalactitic cave,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Hiccoughing dollars which combine in guineas;  
And in the foreground's golden glare  
Our Lady Bountiful

Plays with high spirit a showy, dazzling part,  
And does it well.

The Income Tax on new-world fortunes  
Steals up at intervals upon the fecund beast,  
To spring and seize;

The Expatriate too  
Is now and then reproached.

But let her live where home and duty call,  
And let her, free from any shadow  
(Some, after all, are best unlifted and unlighted),  
Enjoy her present glory free from past chagrin.

## THE TWO APPRENTICES

YES, they once worked side by side  
In the same art-school.  
They went in, close together,  
At the small end of the horn;  
And when they came out at the big,  
They were far apart indeed.  
Queer, queer; but you have only to listen.  
“Listen,” of course, means, “read.”

Both began with the cubes and cones.  
Next, charcoal heads of What’s-his-Name,  
That Greek god with the broad nose  
And other easy “planes.”  
Then plums, bandannas and terra-cotta vases,  
All in oil.  
Then the frizzle-haired Cuban in chaps and serape.  
Lastly they went to Paris and splashed about  
In that big tank of gamboge and vermillion.

“A” was a scream from the start.  
He had personality and wielded it.  
He got mentions and medals beyond count.  
He sent back things to local exhibitions —  
Loud, frantic, thumping mythologies for ceilings,  
And such-like.  
The world’s fairs nabbed him before he was thirty,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

And put acres of space at his disposal.  
Everybody said he had *brio* and "punch."  
The sober few might find him exotic, flagrant —  
Even not quite decent . . .  
But, anyway, he had a vogue,  
And a vast one.

And "B"?

He buzzed along, and nobody noticed.  
He did "illustrations": —  
Folklore and fairy tales for the youngsters;  
Birds, flowers, babies, friendly beasts;  
His drawings, reduced to the width of your palm,  
or less,  
Were printed in "readers."

When the two met back home,  
Some few years later,  
"A" quizzed "B."  
For when "A" stooped to birds,  
They were not hens and robins;  
They were crested swans and heraldic eagles.  
*His* flowers were not hollyhocks and pinks;  
No, they were amaranths and asphodels.  
His babies did not sprawl on any nursery floor;  
They were cherubs with protuberant foreheads  
And allegorical intentions.  
His beasts were not those of the barnyard  
But of the apocalypse:  
Griffins, dragons, unicorns, chimeras

## THE TWO APPRENTICES

Swept along on a zoölogical whirlwind.

"So decorative!" said the starers in the courts of honor.

And "B" went on making primers for the young starers at the alphabet.

"B" prosaically married a sweet young creature  
Just as "A" ran off with a fellow-artist's wife.  
The scandal helped — for a while.

"He is a genius," said the world's fairs:

"We must have him, all the same."

So our rake progressed to matters bigger still,  
And drew down bigger pay.

He blew his bubble,  
Huge, iridescent.

Then his hand began to tremble,  
And the glittering, distended globule to sway.

Rivals pressed;  
But he would not do smaller things for smaller pay.

Then the fairs came to a stop,  
And he was on the edge.

Then he began to topple.

Perhaps he was not fit either for prosperity or adversity.

[Moral reflection: how few of us,  
Alas! are.]

A row of stars, just here,  
Would mark the flight of time;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

But I will simply say: Years passed.  
“B” pegged away at his poultry,  
And his posies,  
And his dogs and cats,  
And his kiddies.

He now owned a country-place,  
And found all his models on the spot  
(Even the children — till they grew too old);  
And he had a car  
To take his drawings into town  
And place them before an attentive publisher.  
And he added acres to acres,  
And sent his boys to college,  
And Rosy and Betty to that nice school  
In Massachusetts.

And his wife, who was “dressy,”  
Dressed — expensively.  
And his boys, who were “sporty,”  
Sported — expensively.  
And his girls, who were “refined,”  
Refined daily.  
It cost; oh, how it cost!  
But the curse —  
Or shall I say, the paint-tube? —  
Never ran dry:  
The hens, the hollyhocks,  
The lammies and the darling babes  
(These last, in retrospect)  
Paid for it all.

## THE TWO APPRENTICES

And once, at twilight's fall  
(The tremolo is needed here),  
A wanderer,  
Who might have been in tattered velveteen  
And worn a straggling Vandyke beard,  
Paused at the lodge  
With hollow, hungry eyes  
(It was the wanderer, not the lodge, that had  
them) —

Oh, shucks! I've thrown myself quite off the track:  
I'll pull another stop and start afresh.  
Well, then, what I'd say is this:  
A limp, bedraggled eagle, who had once  
Full-faced the sun and furied in its glare,  
Dropped in the dusky farmyard;  
And it was, or might have been —  
Oh, you know who.  
And you know too  
That dash and flash, in the long run,  
Are nought;  
That allegory withers;  
That *chic* and *brio* soon pinch out,  
And gorgeous "decorative schemes"  
Fade as the grass.

But —

Children will always come,  
And they must learn their letters;  
And they must hear, in endless line,  
The old-time tales,  
And see their dusky visionings

## LINES LONG AND SHORT .

Made vivider upon the painted page.  
Birdies and flowers will always have a vogue;  
Babies and household pets will never end their reign.  
Pile up your palaces,  
And cover them with sprawling splendors,  
Flaunted through myth and symbol:  
The humbler artist  
Has but to marshal  
With lifted brush  
His chicks and chickadees  
And lead the smiling charge  
That strikes those proud walls down.

## DELICACY

COME, get into my car  
(I never had one, and I never shall  
Have one; but luxury is reached with ease  
Here on white paper).  
James, speed us toward the north.  
There I will spread before you  
A country-side composed exclusively  
Of gentlemen's estates:  
Chateaux and manor-houses and baronial halls —  
Elizabethan, Louis Quinze, Beaux - Arts, or  
What-you-will,  
With sunken gardens,  
Pleached walks and pleasances,  
Well-tamed ravines  
And cultivated bluffs from whose sandy rims  
One sees a great blue water.  
Nor must I forget some minor matters:  
The lodges, greenhouses and garages  
Which, for our purpose,  
Are more important still.  
Remember these.

Within one palace, —  
The most determinedly,  
Most incongruously monumental of them all, —  
Resides our magnate's wife

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

(With family and *servitù*, of course;  
But I'm concerned with her alone,  
Or nearly).  
How the money came,  
The fortune vast and sudden,  
I'll not stop to say:  
Banking, perhaps;  
With interest (called discount) paid before 't was  
due,  
And half-days pared away, and five days lopped  
From off the year; — no, that might be too slow.  
Well, traction, possibly; for it is wonderful  
How fast the nickels and the dimes pile up.  
Or deals in grain or stocks upon some "board";  
Or Advertising, with a good-sized A.  
This last, I'm told, brings in enormous gains  
And leads at once to pergolas and pools.

All this, however,  
Delays my present purpose and concern.  
*That's* with the lady's character, which was  
Flawless, superb;  
Bourgeois, fundamentally —  
If one may use the word  
Without misunderstanding.  
She was not greatly different in wealth  
From what she'd been in circumstances narrow —  
Save that she felt a bit the better armed  
To keep herself unspotted from the world.

## DELICACY

Shall we review her early years?  
Day-school, then, with other little girls  
Nice, if not choice;  
And Sunday-school,  
With commendation and a gift book  
From her dear pastor;  
Then, boarding-school,  
Carefully chosen, but not too costly.  
Then a few seasons of society,  
In unpretentious forms;  
Then followed courtship, somewhat self-contained —  
Not tepid, yet not ardent;  
Then came a nice home wedding;  
Then two darling children,  
Accomplished in due course;  
Then some years of simple home life;  
And then “success,” as it is called,  
With transplantation  
To more ambitious and emphatic scenes.

When she arrived, the châtelaines round about  
Viewed her with glance deliberate  
But not unfriendly. After a while,  
They found her rather nice —  
Not vulgar, not vainglorious —  
And took her in.  
Now, do you think that all these various ladies  
Were different essentially,  
In genesis and progress,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

From the new-comer?  
Why, not at all, —  
They'd merely got there first:  
Good, pleasant, friendly, worthy people,  
Correct in all their ways and manners,  
Women and men alike.  
Through years and years,  
No scandal, no irregularity,  
No slightest impropriety,  
Had sullied the fair name  
Of this chaste settlement  
And its charmed circle.  
The church-spires evangelically forbade;  
The lovely little town library  
Said softly, "No."  
The press, in the big city  
Twenty miles away, said,  
If saying so were necessary,  
"Oh, beware!"  
You see, then, that these *fortunati*  
Were really not aristocrats:  
They heeded what the lesser public thought,  
And walked accordingly — through  
A white world draped and deadened in the snow.

"What!" you will ask; "'midst these three  
thousand souls  
No passion, no mischance?'"  
Ah, me! I greatly fear  
You have your mind too strongly fixed

## DELICACY

On Gothic gables and Renaissance towers  
And "period" furnishings.  
Turn back your thoughts  
Toward lodge, garage and cottage.  
Now and then our good and happy folk  
Would sin and suffer and atone,  
But do it all vicariously:  
The tenantry, retainers, unregarded "hands" —  
Such as merely filled the chinks  
Of this great social edifice —  
Sometimes came forward on occasion  
(Such an occasion as we now approach),  
To act as proxies.

Among those plain persons  
Who, in middle life, or past,  
Were piecing out their days  
By service with the rich and great,  
We find some young folks, two at least:  
A girl of seventeen, still busy with her books  
At a good school near by;  
A youth of twenty, one whose fixed intent  
To rise above his "station"  
Had pushed him to the city and to college.  
One of this pair, I'll not say which,  
Acknowledged, through parental ties,  
A certain fealty to our châtelaine;  
The other, an allegiance, not unlike,  
In other quarters.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

These two young things,  
In over-charged mid-August,  
Had met and mingled foolishly.  
One did not understand  
What admiration might actually mean;  
And neither realized to what sad lengths  
Their dalliance would lead.  
The world, the cruel-eyed, was to be faced;  
Neither knew what to do  
Toward beating back the coming horror  
Into the dark.

One morning tracks in the winter woods,  
Winding and weaving to and fro,  
Preluded the whole tale —  
With all its pauses, stumblings, hesitations,  
Pleadings and despair;  
A girlish figure, decently composed,  
Lying in the snow,  
With poison-grains re-crystallized on pallid lips;  
Near by, within a lesser maze of footmarks,  
Which spoke of dread, of vacillation, of remorse,  
The body of a youth all stark,  
A weapon at his side;  
Within two homes  
Two simple mothers insisting fondly,  
The one upon a daughter's stainlessness,  
The other on the pure nobleness of a son.  
All unavailing  
The spires,

## DELICACY

The sweet reading-room,  
The press:  
Penalty paid,  
There in the very scene  
Of earlier pleasures.

Came the authorities,  
Tramping through the snowy woods;  
The pressmen expeditiously pictured them —  
Those once-green, dusk recesses,  
Now so stripped and cold:  
*Our woods, our own estate, the sylvan scene*  
Where our dear, cherished Mabel, just that age,  
Would sometimes stoop to pluck first violets  
in May.  
To our Lady's sense  
Every slight swell or hollow  
Shadowed by oak or thorn  
Shuddered and shivered  
'Neath the profaning touch of sin.  
She herself, like a smirched ermine,  
Turned up appealing and protesting eyes  
And twitched and slunk away from common sight.  
Papers were barred from the château,  
And Mabel, whose chaste eye and ear  
Must never know such horrors,  
Was swiftly sent to friends  
Far, far outside the zone of local news,  
The day before some six young girls in white  
And a soft-spoken, cautious clergyman

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Stood beneath one of the spires  
To put the best face on a naughty deed.

Next spring the family left for other scenes  
Before the violets came.

When they returned  
(And with them Mabel  
In all her innocent, girlish charm)  
The sparse woods had been leveled  
And in their place there stood  
(Proof of laborious months  
Spent by the soil's new owner)  
A rustling field of corn  
All ready for the harvest.

Here and there a simple bloom of aster  
Or ripening spray of goldenrod  
Stood with bright confidence  
Amid the humpy furrows,  
And no kind hand stretched forth  
Through the rank growth  
To save it from the cursory, rapacious reaper  
That even then  
Might be upon the way.

## POSTPONEMENT

WHEN Albert F. McComb  
Died in his native Dodgetown  
At the age of sixty-odd,  
People said — the few who said anything at all —  
That he had lived a futile life,  
And that Europe was to blame:  
His continual hankering after the Old World  
Had made him a failure in the New.

At seventeen he was reading “In Dickens-Land,”  
just out,  
And Ruskin’s “Stones of Venice,”  
And Maudle’s “Life of Raphael”;  
And he was never the same afterward.  
He decided on romance.  
Romance, with Albert, was always a good bit back,  
And some distance away —  
Least of all in booming Dodgetown,  
In the year of grace eighteen-seventy-three.  
There was Shelley poetizing at Pisa  
(Thirty-five years before Albert was born);  
And there was Byron with his countess  
In that conspiratorial old palace at Ravenna  
(Four thousand wide miles from Main Street,  
Or more). Et cetera.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

At twenty-one Albert "took a position,"  
But he never put his heart into the work.  
At twenty-five he might have bought a share in the  
business;  
But, "No," he said, "I may cross over soon;  
Let me be foot-free, and fancy-free — no entangle-  
ments here."

When he was twenty-six  
Adelaide Waters, tired of waiting,  
Married an ambitious young hardware-dealer,  
And on the whole did well.  
But Albert cared little:  
"She" was waiting on the other side.

Early he became a boarder,  
And a boarder he continued to be.  
"Why tie myself up with property?" he asked;  
"The time will come, and I must be without con-  
straint."

Thus, without constraint, without career, without  
estate,  
Without home and family,  
He waited for the great hour,  
Living on slick steel-engravings,  
And flushed, mendacious chromo-lithographs,  
And ecstatic travel-books penned by forlorn English  
spinsters.

## POSTPONEMENT

In the new West others wooed Fortune and won  
her;

But Albert was spending fortune on fortune abroad  
Before he had fairly learned to pay his way at home.  
He lived in a palace on the Lung' Arno:  
He saw the yellow river plainly enough  
From the back window of the two-story frame on  
Ninth Street.

He went to the office in a plum-colored coat,  
Of the cut of the early 'twenties,  
And a voluminous stock —  
Though others might see but "mixed goods"  
And a four-in-hand.

Some damsel, *principessa* or *contadina*,  
Hung on his lips, or carelessly betrayed his heart;  
And he, the young poet, —  
Though he had never written a line  
(Stuff such as this not yet having been invented), —  
Lay down in dreamless slumber beside Keats,  
Close to the walls of Rome.

Some years passed by,  
But Albert never budged from home.  
Savings grew slowly; no kindly patron appeared; no  
rich relation died.

But less and less did Albert live  
In terms of Dodgetown and of Caldwell County.  
It was all Lambeth and Lincoln's Inn and Bridge-  
water House;  
The Schwarzwald and the Forest of Arden;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

The cypresses of Verona, the cascades of Tivoli,  
And the Pincian Hill.

At forty Albert was getting a lukewarm salary for  
lukewarm work;  
And some small five-and-a-half per-cent investments  
Brought in three hundred and thirty dollars extra  
per annum.

“In two or three years I shall risk going,” he would  
say;  
“And then . . . !”

But if Albert stayed single, all his sisters did not;  
And if he himself kept on living, several of his adult  
relatives died;

And when he was fifty-two a group of grand-nieces  
Asked him to help with their grocery bills,  
And to see that their mortgage-interest got paid on  
time.

Other things of like nature happened,  
And Albert presently perceived that not every “sin-  
gle” man

Can escape the obligations and responsibilities of the  
married state.

“Well, I must wait,” he said;  
And he began to collect views of the Dolomites.

Albert prosed along past sixty,  
As our muse indicated at the start.  
His young relatives grew up,

## POSTPONEMENT

And some of them married;  
And those who remained single  
Were cared for by their sisters' husbands.  
And one day Albert got word  
That a wealthy cousin, twice removed,  
Who had made millions out of the Michigan forests,  
And had multiplied them into tens of millions on the  
stock exchange,  
And whom he had not heard from for twenty years,  
Had "crossed," as Albert liked to say,  
And had left him a fortune indeed.

Albert sent for steamship folders;

But a dubious July

Was followed by a frenetic August.

The ancient world,

So grandiose and so romantic

To Albert's steadfast eyes,

Went mad.

"Man marks the earth with ruin," he mused;

"But 'his control — Stops with the . . .'"

Yet the sea itself was become a shambles,

And the realm of faery, beyond,

A trampled mire of blood and wreckage.

Albert stood on the brink of things, as ever;

But the earth heaved beneath his feet,

And the fabric reared through forty years fell in ruin  
on his head.

"There will be no peace in my time," he murmured;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

“Nor any salve in generations.  
For me there is no world at all —  
What is my million, here?”

Albert retired.  
He studied the stripes in the wall-paper  
And considered his weak old hands on the counter-  
pane.  
His eyes were become too dim to see the Here and  
Now,  
Or to divine the local glories Just About to Be.  
In a negative way he had been a good enough man;  
And, “Heaven will do,” he sighed;  
“But — has it a Val d’Arno, a Villa d’Este,  
Or a —?”  
But you, kind friend and reader,  
Shall have the last word here;  
And mind you choose it well.

## POLLY GREENE

DOUBLET and hose —  
Such was the disposition  
Of Polly Greene.  
Before her seventh year  
She had clothed mind and soul  
In pants and roundabout.  
As her life went on,  
She slightly changed  
Her masculine habiliments  
To keep in touch  
With current fashions  
And increasing age,  
But thought of going back to petticoats  
Only when 't was too late.

Tomboy at tender age,  
Hail-fellow-well-met ere twenty,  
She left her native Priceburg,  
After an independent, *orageuse* career,  
And came to town  
To be a soul more independent still, —  
“One of the boys” indeed.

Charlie McBride,  
Priceburg's richest youth,  
Who drove a buggy and a pair of bays,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Proposed before she left;  
But Polly stood him off.  
Art, she thought, would do, at present,  
And do alone.

At the big school  
She bloused it with the fellows,  
Picked up with eagerness  
Their jargon, slang and blague,  
Tried to make her brush-work  
As "strong" and tough as theirs, —  
Trained with the rabble of resilient males,  
And paid her way from her own purse.

Proposals followed here —  
Well-meant or ill.  
Polly stood off these new chaps too:  
Dian when she could be,  
And Penthesilea when she must.  
After a while these men — and others —  
Understood;  
While, in the background of the scene —  
And of her mind —  
Was Charles McBride  
To keep her feminine.

Back home, next summer, in vacation time,  
McBride proposed again.  
Polly was rather pleased,  
But could not "feel" it:

## POLLY GREENE

After that bunch of pungent masculines  
Charlie seemed tame, insipid.  
He meant well, doubtless;  
He was even flattering;  
But — let the matter lie.

Presently our Polly,  
As painter,  
Reached consciousness of better things:  
Widened horizon and a brighter light.  
She went to Paris.  
The boys back home were not a patch  
On the wild crew of impudent *rapins*  
That waited for her there;  
But *vi et armis*  
Our heroine,  
Virgin and amazon,  
Held even these in check;  
And when she'd reached  
The very culm and acme  
Of rowdy-dowdiness  
She sent her photo home.  
Charlie McBride proposed by letter.  
“I’ve kept my charm!” she thought,  
And filed his note away.

Polly stayed on in Paris.  
Her visage, like her painting,  
Grew hard and “strong”;  
But no new photo found its way

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Across the deep.

That first and only one,

Conned like a classic

By her remote adorer,

Was all.

In return, he sent his own.

He'd given up the buggy for a four-in-hand,

And showed himself, *en cocher*, on the box.

Yes, Charlie stayed at home,

A chump, constant but soft,

Just a provincial fixture:

Too rich to get a move on,

Save as he toured through Douglas County,

And the wide lands 'twixt Danville and Mattoon.

There was a place, he wrote,

Beside himself for her.

"How nice of him!" thought Polly,

And she packed her traps,

And went to Egypt,

Thence to India,

Painting strange sights and folk,

Holding her own

'Gainst all and several.

And in Bombay she found her first gray hair.

When she returned to Priceburg there were  
more.

Times again had changed;

He met her at the depot

## POLLY GREENE

In a proud motor-car.  
He saw — but would not see —  
Her graying hair.  
Well, he was older too;  
And as he whizzed her on  
Toward the drear homestead  
Where her parents sat,  
Quite ready for the grave,  
He spoke again.  
She laid her hand on his;  
“Oh, Charlie! this is good of you!” she said;  
“It’s like you; you are Kindness’ own self.”  
Almost in tears,  
She knew ’t was he that kept her young,  
And woman still.

And yet, next month,  
She left the old folks  
To fate’s hard chance  
And shaped her course for the Pacific.  
Middle-aged — yes, more —  
But strong and gallant,  
Indefatigable,  
Masterfully alive,  
She drove toward Honolulu:  
Her “art” must enter on another “phase.”  
And there, some three months later,  
Came the news:  
“Charlie” McBride was dead.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

What was she now?  
No woman,  
No longer young;  
He who had kept her such was gone.  
She had cast down the crown of life  
(A coronet of paste, if you prefer),  
And what was left?  
An aged creature indeterminate,  
A mere speck epicene,  
In that vast futile world  
Of sky and sea.

Well, do you ask an end?  
Must every life have that?  
Consider the existences — so many —  
Which drag and shuffle on,  
Rueful and frustrate . . .  
Here I leave you.

## MANNERS

FRANKLY, I hardly know whether  
To choose as my present protagonist  
Michael McGinniss, whose mother  
Called him so fondly, "You, Mickey!" — or  
Robert George Worthington, Junior —  
Robbie or Bobby or Bob, at life's differing stages.  
Both of these names are dactylic,  
Fitting in well with my measure.  
Maybe the second's the better.

Robert George Worthington, Junior —  
No; I'll begin with the other.  
Mickey McGinniss, dear reader,  
Dirty and noisy and rowdy,  
Son of a home most deplorable,  
Forged more or less for himself and tumbled up  
anyhow.

Child of the sidewalk and gutter?  
Believe it, my brother! —  
(And sister). Were I rewriting these lines,  
"Sister" should have the first place; for I am a  
feminist,  
If but for the sake of our Robert's nice mother —  
Dear, delicate lady. Returning to Mickey:

Little of schooling had he; — no "education,"

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Whether in sense Anglo-Saxon or Latin.

Warm-hearted, hot-tempered, quick-fisted, loose-tongued —

Such language in front of his mother and sisters!

And when he was ten — and that barely —

They gave him a cap and a telegram.

Why is it, pray, that those messenger-boys

All seem so tiny, so stunted?

Yes, they're put into long trousers too early.

All kinds of hours, in all sorts of places!

A twelvemonth his term, and it did n't improve him.

Freed from this life, he grew stalwart and cocky.

*"He'll make his way,"* said that fond, hopeful mother.

*"He will!"* said the corner policeman.

Returning at last

To Robert George Worthington, Junior:

*"What a nice boy!"* exclaimed every lady.

Always clean hands and clean collars —

Tho' not yet eleven, dear people!

Always so neat and so quiet at table;

Always got up from his chair when mamma

Came into the parlor;

Kept to his books, and kept his books tidy;

Never went down to the beach with the rabble,

But tubbed it at home in papa's own tiled bathroom;

*"Yes, sir"* and *"No, ma'am"* to all of the friends of the family.

## MANNERS

“Lord!” cried papa’s knowing partner,  
In talk with the mother of his,  
“Pity the kid!  
Why, by the time he is twenty,  
Loose in the world, he’ll be a poor little canary,  
Out in a passel of sparrows.  
What they won’t do to him!”  
Quite so, my friends; if a fellow’s made soft in his  
non-age,  
Pulpy indeed will he be when he’s thirty.  
Don’t teach your growing boy manners — that  
queers him.

While Robert — or Bob — was at college —  
(“Shucks! it will spoil him for business!”)  
Exploded that far-seeing partner) —  
Mickey was driving a wagon,  
Handing round butter, eggs, soap and potatoes.  
Set in a rather tough ward was this grocery,  
And a few times a year it served as a polling-place —  
Oh! but it *was* tough!  
(This in the day ere our women folks voted.)

Mickey became a clerk of election;  
Later, the “cap” of his precinct.  
Bad company? Well, I should say so! —  
Talk of your fist-fights and Billingsgate!  
Husky and hectoring,  
Mickey would bulldoze the timorous voter.  
Thus, before long, he received from a somebody

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Big and important in city or county  
Wagon and pair and took to political hauling.

Meanwhile our Robert was moving ahead  
Under the Elms, — making friends, making Bones,  
Making all, through his manners.  
“Our Lady of Lawrence,” they called him:  
Cordial, correct,  
Confident, quiet,  
Perfectly straight, but no sissy.  
When he came out from the shade  
His satisfied father carried his influence  
Into the offices (private) of one or two sizable com-  
panies,

And Robert walked after.

“The boy is a charmer!” said old Eli Belden,  
The grim and the grimy:  
“Possibly not worth sour apples —  
And yet I will chance him.”

Eli gave him a desk and next day went forth to a  
manicure.

Our Robert walked on; not quickly, but steadily.  
His talents were fair — by no means remarkable;  
But every one liked him: *address*, good my mas-  
ters.

A little past thirty, he felt well-established —  
Assured of success through the rest of his lifetime.  
And then he looked out on the city.

## MANNERS

Dolent, it needed his eye, heaven knows;  
And his hand; and his heart.

Thirty and three — that's the best age for reformers.  
His eye and his hand both fell on Michael McGinniss,  
Now that most heinous of creatures,

A political contractor —

Words that won't march with my rhythm;  
Nor should I want them to do so.

Nor could mere words paint the things that were doing  
Both in political councils and out in the streets of  
the city.

Mickey's own work under contract was flagrant;  
Worse were the actions by which he was aiding  
Fraud and corruption to keep up a grip  
On place and on power.

Young, bold, and loyal — 't was thus that the elders  
appraised him,

And let him just go the whole limit,  
He profiting little himself. Law caught him red-handed,

And clapped him in jail. Then, bail-bonds not easy;  
The lame duck deserted. Six months in the lock-up.  
That sobered and chastened and just a bit broke him.  
Then, trial; and nothing gained here,  
Save expenses and worry. And then to the lock-up  
(another)

For good — a matter of lustrums.

Our college man followed him into the court-room,  
And followed the course of the trial — helped run it.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Then,

Hating the sin, not the sinner,  
Thinking the flail of the law  
Might better have fallen on backs more deserving,  
Robert put on his panoply —  
Cut-away, dog-skins, silk hat, and Malacca —  
And hied him away to the Governor,  
Meaning to ask for indulgence — yes, pardon.

The Governor,

Quite the near-gentleman,  
Welcomed him kindly —  
Had met him, in fact, a few times in society.  
Robert, restrainedly cordial, suavely insistent,  
Deferential, yet somehow or other superior,  
Made his impression.  
Those roundabout found him simply astounding.  
It was race; it was blood; it was manners.  
The Governor yielded.  
If he governed a State with a State Board of Pardons,  
He promised his help to make matters go easily.  
If he governed alone, then he acted alone.  
At any rate, Michael McGinniss got freedom.

Years passed. (They do, you perceive,  
In all of these pieces.) At forty  
Robert George Worthington rules as sole head  
Of a thundering big corporation.  
Mickey McGinniss is boss of its teaming department,  
And men, in his eyes, are but mules.

## MANNERS

The two seldom meet, yet whenever they do so  
It's "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," with Mickey  
McGinniss,

And he always remembers his hat.  
And so much for manners.

## DEATH OF AUNT JULIANA

COME, take my hand.  
Together we will go  
Back, back, far back,  
In the dark cave of time; —  
Back to that date, remote, incredible,  
Which saw the birth of Juliana King.  
How long her life!  
Friends, acquaintances, and relatives —  
The last, especially —  
For years had wondered  
When, if ever, she would die.

But, after all, let us make pause  
In our recessional.  
The middle 'fifties saw Juliana  
A girl of twenty:  
A vivid, sparkling creature,  
With fire in her dark eyes,  
And energy for ten.

Jehiel Prince,  
The rugged founder of the house,  
Viewed her at rare intervals  
From under gray, knit brows  
And disapproved:

## DEATH OF AUNT JULIANA

Too much vitality, action, noise —  
A girlish whirlwind.  
And after she had tried, one night,  
To sweep away, Francesca-like,  
On the *aer perso* with a certain youth,  
And was brought back home,  
With scanty time to spare,  
Jehiel never looked at her at all.  
Live in the house she must, and did, —  
And long  
(The other youths all knew  
And none would take a chance);  
But to her sister's husband's father  
She was nought.

Jehiel, the forceful and the prosperous,  
Slept with his fathers,  
And James reigned in his stead:  
A man who might not add  
To what he had received,  
But who, with sense and caution,  
Was able quite to hold his own;  
A foe to all excesses and extravagance;  
And under him our heroine  
Attained her fortieth year.  
None would have called her even thirty-three.  
The vital sap ran freely  
And hope was beckoning ever.  
On provocation slight, or none,  
“Intentions” filled the void;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

And eccentricity began to sketch  
A grotesque mask upon a face once fair.  
Temper developed;  
Rule and reason  
Could set no steadfast bounds;  
And Juliana King  
Became a cross, a trial.

The family could pay her way, and did;  
But she was "one too many."  
They prompted her to journeys, jaunts,  
Sojourns and visits —  
Ever the same result;  
She came back home  
To the relief of puzzled, harassed friends  
And the affliction of the household all.  
"She'll live too long!" James muttered.  
And — for him — she did.

She was fifty-odd  
When Raymond took the helm;  
Yet no one would have dared  
To call her forty-four.  
Tingling with life,  
Self-willed and masterful,  
She held her place in house and family  
And faced the young folks down.  
Raymond's generation was indeed the third,  
And he the perfect type of vigor gone to seed —  
Forceless and careless.

## DEATH OF AUNT JULIANA

The family fortune began to slip away,  
And a young wife of his own kind  
Helped things along.

Juliana became more than a cross;  
She was a heavy burden.

Then followed strife

"Twixt woman young and woman old.

"Will she live forever?" cried the vexed Raymond.

"Send her away!" shouted his furious wife.

What! — "send her away"?

Mop back the sea? Dislodge the polar star?

Juliana went,

Called out the family's shame and cruelty among her  
friends,

Then came back home to roost, a curse indeed.

When she reached sixty,  
Respite seemed to dawn.

Imprudence — glaring, even for her —  
Sent her to bed.

She coughed and burned and shivered;  
And every heart beating in distant rooms

Secretly hoped — I'll not say what.

Doctors came, and nurses;

Bottles in rows; and poultices;

And gas-jets burning through the night;

And household order overthrown.

Expense piled up,

With every penny grudged and felt.

It was the deuce.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

"May she but go!" prayed Raymond in his  
den —  
He who, a child, had hugged his auntie close.

"Doctors," I said; the plural.  
A second came, for consultation —  
A grizzled bachelor.  
His interest, professional or other,  
Mounted to highest pitch.  
He overrode all bedside etiquette,  
Grappled the problem on his own,  
And after many taxing days and nights  
He pulled the tried soul through.  
In a month she was herself again —  
Indomitable, indestructible,  
Younger than her years,  
And vital as the spring.

Her friend, some years her junior, —  
Though neither knew, and none would have  
surmised, —  
Looked on and lingered.  
Was it love?  
Or pity for a slighted — what?  
(The monosyllable I need eludes me here.)  
Or was it joy in his own miracle?  
What did he see?  
But, if it comes to that,  
What did *you* see?  
There are eyes for all.

## DEATH OF AUNT JULIANA

In fine, they married.  
Wife, now, and idol —  
What you will —  
Revived, triumphant,  
Her day had come.  
She could motor past  
Her nephew's house —  
A lesser house than once —  
Scorning both it and him.

. . . . .

And when she died . . . ? you ask?  
Died? Died nothing!  
She's living yet.

## CHARM

THE aura  
Of Gerald Jean La Croix  
Was delicate, perhaps,  
Yet dense and pungent and pervasive.  
It affected men in one way,  
And women in another.  
The average male would soon protest,  
“This is too thick!”  
Or cry, “Oh, give me air!” and  
Go.  
The other sex, however, would bask in Gerald’s  
emanations,  
As if wrapped and rocked  
In the languorous luxuriance of a conservatory  
Where narcissi bloomed.  
At twenty-four Gerald possessed  
Plump hands, moist eyes, locks the reverse of dry,  
And, despite his gentleness,  
An obvious overplus of health.  
No woman quite escaped: least of all, Letitia  
Baynes.

Perhaps old Jasper Baynes himself  
Knew for what he was piling up that money—  
and for whom:  
Perhaps not. In either case

## CHARM

He went on doggedly, automatically,  
Year after year — some forty of them —  
Putting dollar to dollar.

He *must* have had a plan, an object, a reason, don't  
you think?

Yet some hint as to the ultimate destination of accu-  
mulated wealth

Might have come to him from so common an object  
as a beehive;

Or an example of disinterested toil for others

From certain clever workers in his own factory,  
Who, dowered with inventiveness,

Seemed willing to place their gifts and skill

At the disposal of the "business,"

Profiting its proprietor notably,

Themselves not one iota.

But instead of mulling over analogies,  
Jasper died abruptly — just like that! —

Leaving a few hundred thousand dollars

To a young wife

Whom, after a long period of bachelorhood,  
He'd married but a year before.

The captious said of Gerald, later,

Beginning with his name —

But here I'll pause to register the surmise

That few of them could have accomplished,  
On the basis of mere personal charm,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A hundredth part of that which he achieved so readily.

Yes, they said his real cognomen  
Was as prosaic as you please —  
That he had taken his present one  
From some Canadian uncle,  
And then arranged the rest to suit;  
That he had begun life at Bay City or Saginaw  
Among the buttoned boots and kid slippers of a shoe store;  
That, when he first came to town,  
He dabbled behind a counter in haberdashery;  
That his employer, in his own family's absence abroad,  
Had taken the lad for a summer fortnight  
To tonic Charlevoix,  
Putting him forth as a protégé,  
Or even in the light of an adopted son.  
At all events, it was high up  
In the clear and breezy North,  
When he was sporting spaciously and showily  
In August wantonness,  
That Letitia Baynes,  
Young widow of three months,  
First met him.  
In every aspect, mood and gesture  
He spoke compellingly for himself — and her;  
While, as for the gossip,  
That (howsoever timed or tuned)  
Never once reached her ears.

## CHARM

He was a bright and florid blossom  
Swaying, long-stemmed, like an oriflamme,  
In breezes of sufficient fiscal force,  
And casting carelessly on that crisp northern  
air  
Odorous addresses which fully served — and more —  
To draw the various butterflies  
That fluttered round about in the usual mid-summer  
mood;  
Letitia first and foremost.  
He won her; it was for him  
That Jasper Baynes had moiled till sixty-one.

Next winter to Palm Beach:  
Instinctively he knew his own.  
On the way down, or back, his wife —  
But let me ponder: Can people conveniently  
Fall from the platforms of observation-cars?  
Not with plausibility complete.  
They may slip better from the smooth after-decks  
Of yachts that sail, by moonlight,  
Through languid, Southern, February seas.  
Well, anyhow, when Gerald Jean La Croix  
Came North again, he was a widower of twenty-  
five,  
Not over-clouded by appropriate sadness;  
And (despite the claims of certain relatives by mar-  
riage)  
He was wealthy.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

But “north” is a most comprehensive word,  
Including scenes more vibrant, rich, rewarding — to  
some —

Than any that are offered by the Middle West.

Our Gerald had a native instinct and affinity  
For the swell and the exclusive (lovely words!)

And the “best”;

And now, at last, he had the fullest means  
To gratify his longings.

In the South he had known how to make a hundred  
thousand tell

Among a hundred millions;

And in the East he took up several threads  
Whose spinning had been begun elsewhere.

These various threads ran with marked directness  
From Floridian sands to New England rocks:

The “guests” came back, just like the “hosts” and  
waiters.

One of these threads tied, in due course  
(Speaking in terms of poesy and compliment),  
A lovers’ knot.

Our Gerald’s personal emanations were as efficacious  
Among the coves and reefs of Maine as elsewhere.  
In another year he was again a husband —  
A second widow.

His first wife had been three years his senior;  
This new one was thirteen.  
The first was merely well-to-do;  
The second had her million.

## CHARM

Bought by each:  
They had appreciated — so had he.  
And besides, the new mate was own aunt  
To a young thing whose mother's fortune,  
Preposterously swelled by marriage, by bequests,  
By boundless yieldings from Pennsylvanian mines,  
And by Olympian accumulations outside all common  
rule,  
Had made her consort  
To a pseudo-claimant to a pseudo-throne  
In one of Europe's most obscure and distant corners:  
America, land of Opportunity!  
In such a *milieu* (or on its edge),  
And subject most peculiarly  
To all its influences and its temptations,  
Stood Gerald Jean at thirty — stands to-day.

Does anybody feel like trying  
To finish out his life-course for him,  
Giving him thirty years more?  
*I* don't; yet one may ask how much is to be hoped  
For — or from — an article of purchase and of sale  
'Mongst women all his elders;  
Or may wonder how much of comfort or of joy  
He, guarded close through years still good,  
From depredations on Hesperidian fruits  
By dragon worldly-wise and vigilant,  
Will ever reach;  
Or might be prompted to inquire  
How much of manly ambition,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Or how much urge toward some real social service,  
Is likely to survive the consciousness of the fatal  
page  
In that red, dumpy little tome,  
The Almanach de Gotha.

What remains?  
An aging Prospero who waves his wand  
To rule cravats and socks,  
To call forth exquisite dinners,  
To order picnics, far too elegant,  
On rocks or sands  
(In either case they'll soon be washed away).  
And then, at sixty, from ladies young and old,  
These verbal tributes:  
“How well he holds his years!”  
“He had a most romantic youth, they say!”  
“Who can resist  
Such magnetism and such charm?”  
*Pfui!* let's pass to something else.

## WHISPERINGS

MISTS, roll aside!  
Disclose the girlhood days  
Of her, our pythoness,  
Celestine Mudge.  
Sun, shed your rays  
Upon the gifted child  
Of Ormuz and of Ind.—  
("Ind." — short for Indiana);—  
Ormuz, abode of whisperings,  
"Controls" and leadership,  
The Hoosier Domremy.

From sixteen on  
Our over-dowered girl  
Was subject  
To addresses and solicitations  
From out the empty air.  
A pressing crew surrounded her,  
Refused the other life  
For the concerns of this,  
And showered on her their messages  
Fatuous, malapropos, importunate.

The chief of these,  
Professor Pike  
(Deceased in 'eighty-five),

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A kindly and benevolent old man  
Ready with counsel and fecund of advice,  
Would try to stand the others off;  
Yet often did this rabble rout  
Break through his guard . . .  
Oh, 't is vexatious  
To have some ancient Roman  
Whisper across your ironing-board,  
Or some lost cousin  
Sizzle from the pies  
When cookstove door's thrown open,  
Or Indian chieftains  
Grunt about your pillow  
In the dark middle of the night.  
But all these things, and more,  
Celestine must endure for years.

She married; but her husband —  
Oh, he just went away.  
She lived along alone with her one child.  
The townsfolk sniggered as they passed the house,  
And boys and girls at school  
Made life for little Nan one misery.  
Ormuz, how could you!

Visitors came. Yielding to their demands,  
Celestine learned a set of parlor tricks.  
She — or her familiars —  
Wrote names in tight-closed books on distant  
shelves,

## WHISPERINGS

Passed checkers through a shut backgammon  
board,  
And sent from cones word of the long-since dead:  
A scanty living, and a dubious.

And last came Dora Dale,  
Silly and rich and more than middle-aged;  
Not bereft, precisely,  
But looking for an interest.  
The two were intimates in no time;  
And then, before so very long,  
The three of them,  
Celestine, Dora and Professor Pike,  
Set out upon the conquest of the world.

Dora loved the Professor from the start;  
His genial wisdom and loquacity  
Held her in thrall.  
She saw him as the climax of the ages  
And sat her down to tell the world that fact.

Her book, as sketched, began  
With a brief glimpse of Brahmin sages;  
Then came the Greek philosophers,  
Then Rome's wide empire,  
Then Augustine in Anglia,  
The Reformation,  
The Pilgrim Fathers,  
The Continental Congress,  
The Winning of the West,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Old Tippecanoe,  
And Ormuz on the Wabash,  
Professor Pike *in* Ormuz . . .  
You see the chain.  
The apex of mentality,  
The crux of human fate,  
The reading of earth's riddle,  
All centered and all settled here in Ormuz,  
Yet Ormuz nudged and giggled  
And looked for the solution  
Elsewhither. Oh!

Know you, blind village,  
That revelations and phenomena  
Must take place *somewhere*.  
Why this spot any less than that?  
Wisdom is one; the world a unit.  
Wonders may have their home on any threshold —  
(Or, if you live in an apartment,  
On the back porch).  
Each man, each woman, is a miracle,  
The crown, the cap, the climax of the race  
(This gives us all a chance) —  
The home and haunt of mystery. . . .  
But Ormuz looked afar:  
To N. Y., or even farther yet.

And so Celestine — do you wonder? —  
Packed up her things and made the great refusal.  
She, with Dora and Professor Pike,

## WHISPERINGS

Wiped off the clay of Ormuz  
And went to Indianapolis.  
Here they called spirits from the vasty deep;  
Here Dora started on her book.  
This city showed more interest,  
But none too much;  
And in the fall the three went East.  
Manhattan gave them foothold  
And a small section  
Of its wide, noise-crammed ear.  
They listened too (while finishing the book):  
They began to hear from Paris  
Of plain George Mullins,  
From Ottumwa, Iowa,  
Who had rigged up a cabinet,  
There in the Rue de Seine,  
And set the town a-tingle.  
“Our way lies o'er the sea,” said Dora;  
“On to London!”

Celestine now had gained  
Aspect and manners urban,  
And yet had kept  
Her semi-rustic, sweet sincerity;  
And as for round-eyed little Nan,  
She was an utter darling.  
Dora, with experience and aplomb for three  
(Or four, counting the Professor),  
And purse for twenty,  
And letters to the social powers

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Of Babylon . . .

Yes, they soon made good:  
Countesses and Oxford dons  
Thronged their hotel for sittings;  
And in a fortnight they were quite the rage.

London, how could you!

You, with your myriad teachers, preachers,

Organs and vehicles,—

I don't mean street-pianos,—

You, too, must quest for the remote,

Must hanker for the Elsewhere,

Hone for the Something-Other!

Must you, too, be told

That man's a wonder in all places,

That miracles may crop out anywhere —

In Goswell Road as readily

As on Fourth Street in Ormuz?

That thwarted sibyls doubtless dwell

In Shoreditch and in Clapham?

That smothered oracles might speak

Out through the smoke of Southwark?

And if you say the still small voice

Shall come best from the still small town,

What quieter spots than some that lurk

Within the heart of a metropolis?

Take, for example,

A suite upon the twentieth floor

Of a well-kept hotel —

Such a one, in fact, as our Celestine,

## WHISPERINGS

Back in her native land, now occupies.  
High above the mists, close to the stars,  
She lives, well-dressed, well-fed, well-thought-of,  
With little Nan  
At a nice boarding-school . . .

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

### ALONZO GROUT

HE "found himself"  
When on the threshold of sixteen,  
While the townspeople  
Still called him "Lonnie."  
He jotted down some lines,  
Looked in the glass,  
And saw a poet.

His first things were "occasional."  
He crowned his head with gray  
To celebrate a golden wedding;  
And Grandma Betts,  
Who felt that she was even older,  
Reached up and gave the blushing lad a kiss.  
Next year he was a patriot of the early days,  
Hymning the town's chief glory —  
That fortunate woman  
Who had become  
Vice-president of the Colonial Dames:  
"He will go far!" breathed the dry spinster  
Who ruled the public library's twelve hundred books.

Alonzo presently discovered  
The universe of nature and of art:  
Stars, rills, fate, rondeaux, Shelley, and the rest,  
Gaining in knack and subjectivity.

## ALONZO GROUT

The Baptist minister laid his hand  
Upon our hero's shoulder;  
But as concerned the men and boys in general —  
Well, never mind.

And thus to twenty-three.  
The more censorious among the neighbors  
Now grew impatient:  
Lonnie, they felt, — yes, he was “Lonnie” yet, —  
Had shown his “gift” — and more than shown it;  
Let him come down to life’s realities.  
In Lonnie’s set they married early  
And put a firm young shoulder to the wheel.  
However, Alonzo Grout chose his own course:  
He made a volume,  
Sought the market,  
And stood a published poet.  
Then “general literary work”  
Took him to town  
And steadied him the while he served  
As page, as acolyte, as Ganymede  
(He felt himself all three)  
Unto the Muse.

He tried all forms,  
From sonnet to chant-royal.  
He did a tragedy —  
Oh, it out-Cenci’d Cenci!  
And he did masques —  
Things more Jacobean

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Than James himself (James First),  
Or Jonson, either.  
He even printed in the magazines!

And so he single-footed it along,  
Luxuriating in his Self  
And in his self-expression.  
The reading public,  
Comprising about three hundred and seventy-five  
people, several critics included,  
Cried, "A wonder!"

Thus for some seasons —  
Increasing "output" and increasing fame;  
Clubs of a special kind enrolled him;  
He read, and rather widely, his own verse.  
And then, within the limits of a year,  
His vein pinched out.  
Pick as he might, no ore shone to his view;  
And so —

One day he shut up his Sahara-desk  
And took the trolley to a suburb,  
Where he was minded to consult  
An eminent specialist, so to speak:  
A man whose blood showed various mingled strains  
And who had penned, in more languages than one,  
Many conspicuous things in prose and verse;  
And everybody said of him  
That he was kind to "younger men."

## ALONZO GROUT

He rose from his indefatigable machine  
And looked Alonzo over with a friendly care.  
“Are you American?” he asked.  
“On both sides, yes,” Alonzo proudly said —  
“For generations.”  
The sage and genius sadly shook his head.  
“My boy,  
I fear your case is hopeless.  
Like others of your blood,  
You have mistaken:  
You thought yourself a spring, when but a tank.  
You’ve dipped yourself quite empty,  
And there’s no *source*” —  
He gave the word a Gallic twist —  
“To feed you and replenish.”

Then he spoke at length  
Of the native mind and soul —  
Its soil and its topography:  
A watershed without the proper pitch;  
A soil light, shallow, friable,  
Fit for sparse shrubs, perhaps,  
But not for secular oaks;  
No deep and cavernous reservoirs,  
Spring-fed,  
From which great streams might issue;  
Scant descent  
Of certain blessed dews of heaven  
Through an arid atmosphere  
Upon an earth too lean.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

From our native stock  
He looked for little,  
In any of the arts.  
The great things, he believed,  
Were to be wrought by other, newer blood.

He walked with our poor boy to the front door.  
“Have you tried — essays?”  
Alonzo glowered and made his get-away.

So, then! Up in the air at thirty-three!  
I am not one to say  
That anybody’s life —  
No matter how mistakenly begun  
Or how mistakenly conducted —  
Is finished by that date;  
Not at all. By no means. *Point du tout.*  
But — for an artist! Well, it’s serious.

Alonzo could not leave the life.  
Even the printing part of it —  
Galleys and formats, eight-point and flubdubs,  
The very smell of ink —  
Entranced him.  
If he might no longer  
Wield poet’s pen,  
He could at least proof-read  
Verse writ by others —  
And do it well:  
For the fine frenzy

## ALONZO GROUT

Often took but little heed  
Of indentations and of semicolons —  
Or even of spelling.  
Thus he faced the situation  
And set his feet upon the lesser way.  
It was still possible  
To live vicarious raptures —  
Putting delight in dashes,  
Passion within parentheses,  
And reels of dubiousness in rows of dots,  
Like this:

. . . . .

Thus he laid hands on his new task:  
Greeting the bright young foreigners  
He could not rival, and hoping  
(Against hope, sometimes)  
That they would sing no less decorously than he,  
Nor chant with voice too strident  
Their rowdy rhythms for a rowdy day;  
Living at second-hand in fonts of type;  
Drudging enthusiastically  
That other souls might scintillate;  
Doing his simple tricks, poor Jongleur,  
Before Our Lady's shrine;  
And scarce suspecting  
Behind the future's veil  
The sad, repellent days  
That were to bring  
(And bring so soon)  
*Vers libre.*

## VICTORY

SHE was jilted! The whole little town  
Was smiling and wagging its tongue  
*Over her!*  
In her own narrow world  
She had queened it for years,  
With hot temper, proud heart, and high hand.  
And to-day!  
In the eyes of them all  
She was humbled, dethroned.  
How they flocked, how they gibed her, to even old  
scores!  
  
All her being, outraged and inflamed,  
Felt one need, one alone:  
She must marry, and that without wait;  
And her husband must be  
One more rich, and more comely, more highly-  
considered  
Than he who had left her.  
She was wedded — a whirlwind! — in less than a  
fortnight;  
Then, panting and dazed,  
She steadied herself in the doorway of marriage  
To ask where she stood.  
  
In a sense she had won;  
She had snatched from disgrace

## VICTORY

A magnificent triumph —  
If you scanned it not closely.  
He was handsome and popular, wealthy and  
young.  
In the choice of a wife he had had his full chance:  
In his day he himself had been called  
A sad flirt and a jilt.  
Shall I brighten his splendor by adding to this  
That his father was rated the town's leading banker?  
You're impressed, I can see.  
(There was only one other.)

Now, the son of a town's leading banker  
Is likely as not, if he lingers at home,  
To be far from a pattern of grace;  
And Victoria Drake (yes, I'll give her a name)  
Was not long on her way to discover this fact.  
All his faults — and he had them in scores —  
Rather grew than diminished;  
And their chief and their climax was this:  
He felt that he'd done her a favor. He had.  
Hence a margin for stragglings and strolling outside —  
He began to philander, to roam.  
There's no need for a close résumé  
Of numbers and ages and names.  
There was smoke. As for fire,  
It was not to be clearly detected.  
But a certain proud heart and imperious temper  
Took counsel of silence and learned self-control.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

In the course of some years — four or five —  
The head of that bank passed away, and the son  
Had his freedom — to show his own hand  
And to pick his own paths.  
For the first time in life he was now in the lead,  
With no other to counsel and guide.  
His success was but fair; he'd been leaning too long.  
“Take in sail!” —  
Was the word, for the home, from a helmsman  
unskilled;  
And a certain high heart and a certain high hand  
Made a drop to a commoner level.

She was thirty and more.  
In her bosom there burned all the earlier fire —  
All its pride, all its power, all its scorn,  
And a temper to wither and sear.  
But this fierce flame of life —  
To what use should she put it?  
All this energy, hot and intense —  
On what object bestow it?  
No pride in her husband; no pride in her home.  
And her children, poor flock,  
Into plain little dullards they threatened to grow.  
All her world seemed to droop, to collapse: must that  
be?  
She cried out for esteem, for regard, for success.  
These must come; she must bring them.  
For herself, for her home,  
For her family circle, her place in the town,

## VICTORY

For her husband, poor weakling and stray,  
She would conquer respect.

A volcano for rage and for anger, for fire and for  
heat,

She would make herself into a hearthstone of cheer —  
A center of comfort and good and well-being

For one and for all:

No mountain of pride and of wrath, hurling forth  
Hot ashes and lava to burn and to blight;

But a well-beloved chimney, whose plumed smoke  
and sparks

Should assemble and group round the fireplace below  
All the best within reach.

She would focus just there the full worth of the town;  
She would benefit others and profit herself.

She would send up a cloud of good deeds and good  
cheer,

Gain respect as a wife and success as a mother.

Those dullards, all four —

In the end they should yield her both credit and joy.

In the course of the years her daughters and sons,  
Who had met her ideals, fulfilled her desires,  
Made homes for themselves,  
And they left her, as young ones have done oft before,  
With regrets not undue, nor too lasting. Her  
husband,

Now slothful and dim (his best days had come first),  
Attained to decorum if not to esteem;

But he never reached any true sense of her worth.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Though 't was felt, should she die, he would marry  
too soon,  
He enjoyed, on the whole, the respect of the town.

She was now "Grandma" Drake,  
The town's focus and hub,  
The column, the prop, the mainstay of all.  
The community's interests centered in her,  
As adviser and friend of both greater and less.  
She welcomed new babies, her grandsons included,  
And half the girl-babies were christened Victoria.  
On her fast-graying temples her triumph shone clear;  
From her eyes, dark and vivid, her victory flashed.

Yes, she gained her reward.  
How would you, sir or madam, take yours?  
In a small daily dribble of comfort and pleasure,  
Or all in one sum, great and noble and fine,  
Well along toward the end?  
Choose your plan; pick your size.

## INTERLUDE

(FOR PREPAREDNESS — JUNE, 1916)

WHEN he was eight years old,  
His father, whom he had almost forgot,  
Came back,  
Hung up a dusty cap and battered sword  
Upon the best-room's wall  
And, after three long years,  
Resumed the daily round of peace.

When he was sixty-two or so,  
War loomed again.  
With late, dull eyes he visioned it  
Plunging across the sea,  
Stalking through city streets,  
And desecrating homes  
In town and country both.

Half a century of peace  
And of prosperity  
Closed with a thunderclap:  
*His* half-century,  
His interlude.  
When has this poor, racked world  
Seen just its like?  
For a whole people  
Remote, secure, heedless, and busy,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

The fond, the foolish days moved on,  
And no one seemed to understand  
How little, or how much, they meant.

Through all this time  
The great world roundabout  
Had heaved and swelled,  
A sad, uneasy flood;  
And now and then some small spent wave  
Came hitherward.  
Asia, a third world, slept indeed,  
Locked up in her unreckoned chamber;  
But, toward the east, kings troubled somewhat —  
And somewhat entertained:  
That is, vexed one another and their own,  
And interested us, if slightly.  
“They’re lasting still,” we said.  
“How weak and foolish are those Old-World ways:  
We are better here.”

Our boy’s own little world —  
If world you’ll call it —  
Lay open wide,  
Divinely young and simple,  
With candid opportunity for all:  
No crowd, no fierce competing, and no tyranny.  
Suicide was rare; child-suicide unheard-of;  
And if the fair occasion failed at home,  
Hope ever beckoned  
From wider, richer realms beyond.

## INTERLUDE

Our boy at fourteen made his start in life  
Under a friend of his own father;  
No horde of banded foreigners opposed:  
His work got welcome and reward:  
A daily wage small, true,  
Yet fit for daily needs, enough for self-respect.

Later, on manhood's verge,  
He moved along  
Toward the grand new spaces of the West.  
Here success, prosperity,  
Came almost unsolicited.  
Nothing too good for him:  
He took the best for granted.

Sometimes, wafted across from wornout lands,  
Came distant echoings that seemed to tell  
Of poverty and hardship and oppression.  
The victims, too, began to come,  
In numbers less or greater.  
“They'll be better here,” he negligently said.  
“But why,” he asked, incredulous,  
“Should any one who really deserves  
Be poor or suffer in a world like ours?”

At thirty-five he had a fortune,  
And doubled back to make it greater.  
A vast new wilderness had been exploited;  
Cities had been reared  
In ugliness and in corruption.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

But the corrupt and hideous  
Were little to his sense —  
Mere incidentals.  
They would pass; if not,  
They counted with a force but slight  
Against the general gain.  
A great people must be allowed  
Its minor faults — spots on the sun.

Ten years later —  
Various other fortunes lost and won —  
He took his family abroad.  
With smiling tolerance  
He saw the pomp of kings,  
And with pleased interest  
The paradings of their armies.  
The world of Europe  
Was but a stage *décor*.  
“How it must cost!” he said.  
“Well, let it!  
So much the worse for them.  
And so much the better” —  
He spoke prophetically —  
“For us.”

And in the Orient  
He condescended to be pleased  
With curios from Peking,  
And with the charming life, in miniature,  
Of Nippon. He brought home

## INTERLUDE

Lacquers and prints from Tokio,  
And friends applauded his exotic tastes.  
These people of the East.  
He'd met already in our own new West.  
There, they seemed misplaced,  
And possibly too numerous.  
Here, in their proper setting,  
They were "so dear," his daughters said.  
"Smart little beggars!" he himself observed.

When he was nearing sixty,  
That outside world (on either side),  
That spectacle, that double pleasure-ground,  
That thing apart,  
Heaved in a general agony.  
He, barricaded 'midst his stocks and bonds,  
Felt inconvenience, then annoyance,  
Then almost distress,  
Until he found a way,  
Aided by those who would be "better here,"  
To put dread weapons into warring hands  
And profit into his own pockets.  
This reconciled him, in a measure,  
To all the folly, passion, and imprudence  
Upon the outskirts.

Rich himself,  
He was impatient with the needy;  
Self-controlled,  
He scorned the rash and reckless.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

But the big world was poor and mad.  
It looked about with hungry, angry eyes,  
And saw our friend so rich and so unguarded;  
It taxed him, too, with his offense.  
He remained almost indifferent —  
Self-confidence had been so long his normal state;  
And cleverness, garnered from a varied experience  
In new environments, had bred  
A ready knack and gumption, equal quite  
To any labored, plodding, trained efficiency.

It was still inconceivable  
That the thrice-holy ritual  
Of dollar-snatching  
Should suffer serious check —  
We were a business people.  
And yet the break was here;  
The flood had come upon him.  
His happy, busy, prosperous life  
Felt a sad jar  
As rude, contemptuous hands  
Seized on its big, frail frame  
And swept across its strings in discord. . . .

Fifty-odd years of poor provinciality,  
Lived by one who had assumed himself to be  
(Through confidence — and through self-confidence  
— misplaced)  
Close to the great world's hub and center,  
Yet safe from its alarums.

## INTERLUDE

In truth,  
Is not mere money-getting but a special gift  
Of an inferior order?  
The world has other gifts, and other needs —  
And other elements more vital and diverse,  
To raise themselves and dominate our friend  
And his poor fortune.

## THE STATUE

THE wedded life  
Of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey D. Mason  
Was ideal —  
Had been for thirty years.  
Everybody said so,  
And everybody was right.  
The home life  
Of the Jackson-Hurds  
Was perfect, too —  
Had been for thirty years and five.  
Everybody said so,  
And everybody was right.  
Yet Misery may issue  
From the graceful loins of Perfection.  
I say so,  
And I am right.

Shall our protagonist be Ella Mason,  
Aged twenty-two,  
Or Roland Hurd,  
Aged twenty-six?  
I may give each a chance;  
But, for the present,  
*Place aux dames.*

To Ella, simple maid,  
As to the twenty thousand good folk of the town,

## THE STATUE

The wedded years  
Of her thrice-worthy parents  
Spoke the last word for pure Monogamy;  
Nor were the Hurds so far behind.  
Before the whole community  
These couples twain  
Reared jointly in the public square  
The towering statue of a grand Ideal,  
Built in enduring bronze.  
Lettered on its inexorable base  
Stood forth these words:  
“One flesh, one spirit.”  
The giant figure, like a newer Moloch,  
Held forth its arms, as if to say:  
“Offer your children here,  
And see what happens.”

What one good pair (or two) have done,  
This model monster said,  
The whole wide world  
Can do, and must, and shall.  
“Yea!” cried the echoing public.  
Yet if it’s all so simple and so common,  
Why lay such stress and lavish so much praise  
On that which is confessed to be  
The glittering exception?

Our heroine felt sure that she,  
The child of such progenitors,  
And Roland, scion of a family

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

No less correct,  
Would meet triumphantly, with utter ease,  
The Statue's most exact demands.  
Why not, with such examples set  
Before their youthful eyes?

Roland had told her (no unusual gambit)  
'T was her fair face had drawn him.  
She, in response, had smiled and bridled;  
And thus the game was on. And yet . . .  
Does beauty grow with the increasing years?  
Not often.  
Do spiritual graces come to take the place  
Of graces merely fleshly?  
Not always.  
Will even use-and-wont control the helm  
When other things are lacking?  
Not inevitably.  
And yet, before the game had far advanced,  
Ella had said to Roland (and herself),  
In substance, if not in measured syllables:  
“I will be your life’s banquet —  
Your feast from start to finish:  
*Hors-d’œuvres, potage,*  
*Poisson, entrée . . .*”  
And so on, down —  
Down to the last sip of coffee,  
To the last crumb of cheese.  
Consider, friends.  
Think what it means to say:

## THE STATUE

“I only, I alone, shall suffice for sustenance,  
For entertainment and for comfort  
Through all your years of life!”  
What shall we call the mental state  
That puts forth such colossal claim?  
Fatuity, naïveté, conceit,  
Self-confidence and self-complacency,  
All five raised to the n<sup>th</sup> degree?  
Yet such was Ella’s stand.

Roland bowed before the Statue  
And undertook the ritual,  
Though with certain doubts.  
Child of the newer day,  
The richer life,  
No great time elapsed  
Before he looked upon the brazen god  
And almost shuddered.  
“One flesh, one spirit!”  
He felt himself to be — himself,  
Reluctant and recalcitrant to fuse.  
And as time went on  
He found that, in good truth,  
He had a fickle palate,  
And that his eyes,  
Those of a roving æsthetic,  
Would feed with relish  
On all the beauties of the world.

He had his business and his business cares;  
He had his home — a better, it may be,

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Than he deserved;  
He had his children, and was in several ways  
A satisfactory parent; yet —  
Man's still imperfectly monogamous,  
And he was very man.

I shall not tell much more.  
Ella was doubtless limited  
(Yes, ladies, many of you are):  
No flowing fount of rich variety.  
Life's friction fretted her,  
And the fret showed in face and temper.  
Some other face, or faces,  
Kept, perhaps, more fair;  
And other tempers, it may be,  
Were found more soothing.  
We may surmise some years  
Of bickering, suspicion,  
Protest, indignation.  
Harvey D. Mason may have shown his ire,  
And even have led his daughter into court.  
A thousand tongues may well have wagged to say:  
“What! this from L. T. Jackson-Hurd's own son!”  
All that I know for certainty is here:

That once, and more than once,  
Roland J. Hurd, in dead of night,  
Went to the public square  
And cursed the Statue —  
Yes, he cursed it roundly.

## THE STATUE

And as he cursed  
He thought of a more liberal life.  
In his brain, if not upon his lips,  
Were justifying analogues  
From human life in other lands,  
And even from dumb nature.  
He saw the Moslem world,  
Approving Turk and Arab.  
Cock-crow brought him another argument,  
With images of docile and adoring hens.  
He even may have thought of Utah.

Still young, and eager and appreciative,  
He shook his fist at the bronze figure, crying:  
“Must each and all invariably conform?  
Because one marriage in a hundred  
Reaches and realizes the high ideal set,  
Must nine and ninety more  
Strive to come square with the Impossible,  
And lapse away to failure and distress?”  
He spoke at length, and with great fluency. But —

“Peace,” said the Statue;  
“Peace — and patience.  
I’m but the working-rule of By-and-Large,  
The loose-gearred law of the Approximate.  
I cannot give detailed regard  
To every individual case.  
You demand too much.  
A man like you might even ask

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

In this our world  
For Justice or Content!  
You are not here for pleasure,  
But for discipline.  
Do the best you can;  
Time's on your side.  
Reward — if you succeed —  
Is elsewhere, possibly.  
Go. Go home."

## THE "ART OF LIFE"

BEFORE Horace Tripp had been married  
A year and a half  
He began to suspect  
That the "art of life" —  
As he handsomely called it —  
Was rather beyond his technique;  
His powers in sleight-of-hand  
Were slight indeed.  
Too many balls to keep in the air:  
His wife, his baby, his grocer,  
His landlord, his publisher,  
His friends and enemies,  
And all the rest of them.  
He made many a sad slip,  
And came to feel petulantly  
That perhaps he was more or less  
A dub.

So he bent himself over his desk  
All the harder.  
If he could not coördinate and control  
The various people who made up  
The elements of his daily existence,  
All the more would he take a high hand

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

With the brain-folk  
Who peopled his books.  
These *had* to behave —  
Had to do as he wanted.  
Sometimes they dashed through adventures,  
Calamities and contortions  
In kingdoms remote and imaginary;  
Sometimes they grubbed in the slums;  
Again, they were clever and elegant criminals  
In "society" — whatever the mode of the hour.  
But, anyhow,  
All jumped through the hoop,  
At his lightest command;  
And each work came out in the end  
Just as the author had planned it, —  
No bit in the teeth, and no balking.  
'T is the weak man, of course,  
Who makes the best tyrant;  
And Horace was ruthless.  
Soon he came to look on himself  
As a species of minor creator,  
Grandiose and omnipotent,  
In a world of his own.

It was not, however, the world  
With which one perforce  
Has everyday dealings.  
Things listed and twisted.  
His publisher carped —  
Returns for them both became meager;

## THE "ART OF LIFE"

And his father-in-law  
Began to scowl his reproaches;  
And all the next summer  
Bettina, with little indifferent Wilfrid,  
Spent at her parents' cool cottage  
High in the pine woods of Michigan,  
While Horace, left quite behind,  
Just boarded. Next year  
He gave up a flat;—  
The butcher had shown some impatience;  
His wife was now dressed by her mother;  
Pew-rent and club-dues were far in arrears;—  
So the three went to live  
Under the roof and the eyes of the elders,  
Who looked with great coldness  
On what they called "scribbling,"  
And begged him to drop it  
For something more useful —  
And profitable.

But Horace, he said, was an "artist."  
Trained to his one line of work,  
Stubborn and proud,  
He declared that a man  
Who could scheme an elaborate novel,  
Shape it, slew it around,  
And push it through to a suitable climax,  
Was a deal of a chap, after all.  
He heartily scorned  
Those "real-estate operations"

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

On commissions from which  
He and Bettina and Wilfrid  
Were now kept a-going.  
What need to put art into one's daily life  
And its manifold problems?  
No; he would place it high and dry

*In vacuo,*

In a row of symmetrical, well-finished novels,  
Set in due order on the towering Shelves  
Of Immortality.

Another lean year. His writings  
Seemed to fall in with the whims of the day  
Less than ever.  
He was a humbug; the public,  
Not knowing the fact, and yet feeling it some-  
how,  
Gave him the go-by.  
Bettina now added her prayers  
To her parents' reproaches,  
And Horace, a martyr,  
“Gave up literature” — in a measure.  
Drugging his deadly aversion  
To business,  
He found him a place  
With his publisher, —  
Yes, with his own;  
For he had knack of a kind  
That gave him a limited value  
In certain practical fields:

## THE “ART OF LIFE”

He could proof-read and edit.  
He became, then, a salaried cog  
In a big and a busy machine.

His new chief had begun  
As a publisher of wall-paper,  
Uttering fields, friezes and dadoes.  
Next he had added stationery;  
Next, books and periodicals;  
And now he was bringing out sparsely, each  
season,  
Volumes of prose and of verse  
In numbers sufficient  
To gild and to dignify  
What choice ones called “trade.”

Horace, at first, was quite lofty,  
And often said, “Pooh!”  
But he had, after all,  
Some slight inklings of sense;  
And before his first year was over  
He hummed in a different measure.  
He now saw “the business”  
As a great feat  
Of imagination and technique,  
A towering, well-knit structure  
Of many fine cantos;  
And Theophilus M. Decker  
As a high creative spirit,  
Strong and compelling:

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A man of mark, of poise, and of breadth;  
Prompt and able in all his relations;  
A prestidigitator  
Of twenty times poor Horace's own power;  
Deft at home with his wife and his family,  
Agile and stout 'gainst his fellow-paladins,  
Dextrous indeed with his hundreds of helpers,  
Prompt with his royalties,  
A pillar of the church,  
A stanch column in the politics of his ward,  
Keen and wary with the assessor,  
And annually gathering in,  
Despite difficulties and competition,  
Sixteen or eighteen per cent  
For self, family, and the clan of the "house";  
Doing it easily, lightly,  
And jocularly. . . .  
"He's a magician!" cried Horace,  
Elate with a promised promotion;  
"Yea, he's an Artist!"

Horace advanced.  
His wife can dress in high feather  
From husband's own purse;  
Her father smiles on him at last,  
And little Wilfrid and Imogene  
Are allowed to respect  
Their immediate progenitor.  
Horace now sits at a roller-top,  
Twiddling his thumbs

## THE “ART OF LIFE”

And knitting his brows at young authors  
Who, flighty and over- “artistic,”  
Might, with a few slight concessions,  
**Do better,**  
Both for the “house” and themselves,  
**If only . . .**

## THE ALIEN

As a child,  
In her own native town,  
She played amidst —  
But you, complaisant reader,  
Shall set the scene quite as you choose.  
Make her loved region  
Plainland or mountain, at your wish;  
And her natal place  
A close-built town of stuccoed fronts  
With a baroque-façaded church for the dull priest,  
Crushed down by a deep pediment;  
Or let the church soar up in bulbous spires,  
From many loose, disheveled shacks of wood.  
(In either case, make nothing of the school.)  
And let an unbridged river mope through wide  
marshes,  
Or dash in headlong flight  
Over a broad, sandy bottom to the sea.  
Let there be many unwilling soldiers,  
To cow their brothers of the streets and fields;  
And tyrannous officials in abundant measure,  
Who draw their sanction from some distant capital —  
Or act without it;  
And let there be a few stout hearts,  
Impelled by hope, or misery, or courage,

## THE ALIEN

Or all three,  
To venture toward the other world.

She crossed at ten;  
And after many days they showed her,  
Through a far-shimmering, watery haze,  
A towering, iron-spiked head,  
And told her she was free.

Free in the close-built streets of a tight-packed city;  
Free in the swirling tide of the lately-come and the  
about-to-come;

Free to trip or trudge behind a push-cart  
Through clattering ways; or, later,  
To mouse beneath a counter  
On which were heaped coarse gloves and shirts and  
shoes —

Or, an it please you better,  
Strange cheeses and odd fruits or vegetables  
Plaited in strings or netted in festoons.  
And through it all — this newness —  
One's own dear tongue, one's old home ways.

After a time, courted in the hurly-burly  
By one from her own province;  
Then another shop, better and bigger,  
With their own infants playing on the floor,  
Or chancing fate outside;  
And one of these, a son,  
Destined to be the family's morning-star —

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Nay, its bright sun in the new heaven;  
The brightest boy in school —  
That school where this strange people  
Offered — and compelled — instruction free.  
Then, after some brief years,  
Through which he sharpened up his wits  
On theory and practice,  
He took his father's petty shop and juggled it.  
It grew within his hands, beneath their eyes,  
To proportions quite unprecedented.  
He walked the shining road of quick success,  
Skipping from peak to peak.

At thirty-five  
He labored in one palace, lived in another,  
And hundreds from his mother's country,  
And other hundreds of abject natives,  
Slaved for his further good.

Soon her grandsons were sporting familiarly  
Through picture-gallery or ballroom,  
And harrying costly furniture,  
Jacobean, Louis Seize or Empire —  
It changed with passing seasons —  
In childish games.  
There were dinners, stately showy things,  
From which she was discreetly absent.  
There were receptions, with music, let us say,  
At which she would appear briefly  
In distant doorways,  
Blinking dark, narrow eyes at the incredible scene,

## THE ALIEN

And then retiring.  
It was a strange, strange world —  
A world apart from her,  
And she apart from it.  
She stumbled through its purlieus  
(Gorgeous they seemed),  
And stammered through its language  
(One she had never rightly learned to speak).

In her retired bedroom  
She gossiped with a few old cronies  
Of origin like hers,  
And shyly entertained her grandchildren,  
When they would permit.  
On certain designated days  
Women, from somewhere,  
Went by, to somewhere,  
On public business — to “vote,” she heard it said:  
A thing repellent and incredible.  
Other things, no less repellent and incredible  
Were printed in the papers, she was told;  
But these she never read.

In due course her grandsons  
Turned lawyers, doctors, “business men,”  
With weapons of offense and of defense  
Unknown throughout her clan in earlier days.  
More than ever was she safeguarded and entrenched  
In this remote and alien world.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A great war came.

The quarrel had two sides, she heard.

How two?

Her heart, forgetful quite of old injustices,  
Was with the land where stood the little town,  
On mountain-stream or plain,  
Which once had been her home,  
The spot of her nativity.

And 'midst the family's recent splendors  
The younger generations spoke up hotly  
(With less discretion than they used outside)  
About the exactions of "Americans"  
As to the attitude of newer stocks;  
And one young lad flung out,  
In a moment of high exasperation,  
That he would go and help his people's cause.  
"Will they let you come back?" she quavered.  
Laughter: and it was explained  
That the means for letting people in  
Were in good order,  
But that the means for keeping people out  
Were good as missing.

So, quietude.

The world was kind and fair;

Privileges were many; obligations, light.

A good old soul, all vague and isolate,  
Rocked to and fro in her protected chamber;  
A little in one world,  
A little in another,

## THE ALIEN

A good deal out of both;  
But tending,  
By all the strength of lengthening age  
And early ties,  
To drift backward toward that world —  
For her at once both young and old —  
Where she began.  
Peace; let her fall asleep.  
But let her sons keep open eyes —  
And turn them the right way.

## TOWARD CHILDHOOD

BACKWARD, O Time, and for a single hour  
Make a small child of him who stands before us  
At the advanced age of seventy-five —  
Leander M. Coggswell, multimillionaire.

In these days gross wealth drugs the very atmosphere,  
And perhaps too little of it has got into the present  
Lines.

Shall I seem, now, to over-do  
If I give Mr. C. one hundred millions?  
Very well; they're his.

He lives to-day in semi-retirement,  
And has partly forgotten how the money came;  
Completely so, if asked officially.  
Others have now bent their backs to the great burden;  
He no longer keeps tab, he tells us, on the workings  
of the vast machine.

He buys now and then a picture, a coronet, a castle;  
He smiles impartially on the great and on the small,  
On the heedless and on the inquisitive,  
Reads detective stories,  
And plays croquet.

Now let us make him a little younger.  
We strip him first of his bland leisure

## TOWARD CHILDHOOD

And of his more puerile interests.  
Five years ago — yes, even less —  
He was aflame to found, to furnish, to fill  
His great museum,  
He, the modern Medici—Cosimo and Lorenzo in one.  
Books, manuscripts, madonnas choked his days;  
Art and learning walked captive at his heels.

But Cæsar never grew so great, you say,  
Upon such meat as that?  
Of course not. There was a previous period:  
A phantasmagoric jumble of varied interests  
Filled the public air; all was kept aloft  
By superhuman skill, and all was juggled  
Just a bit too swiftly for the questioning eye to  
follow —  
Even for the interested orb  
Of the Uncle of us all:  
Banks, foundries, railways, tanks, stock market,  
state legislatures, what you will;  
Everything brought about with suave and Mephis-  
tophelean mien  
By the great Thaumaturge,  
While deft assistants at the lesser tables  
Passed on the properties and dressed the scene.

Peeling away still further from our friend  
His years, his dexterity, his general grandeur,  
We find him on a lower stage before a poorer audience,  
Doing less skillfully and on a smaller scale

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

The tricks that made the man — himself.  
It seems, viewed retrospectively, a mere rehearsal  
Of his immense Performance.  
Here, industrious, thrifty and alert  
(To give his qualities their better names),  
He practiced,  
In semi-privacy and with no possibility of praise,  
The virtues he lauded, later,  
In pamphlets and addresses aimed at the nation's  
youth.

Back still farther.  
No company, now; no firm:  
Just a lone young individual,  
Of parentage blent and non-distinguished, let us say,  
With a young helpmate of his own kind;  
Both struggling together for a foothold,  
Both putting forth their strained endeavors  
To feed and clothe a little flock,  
And to "get on."

Next go his wife and children.  
We have left now only a young clerk or handy-man,  
Of lingo semi-rustic, semi-foreign, semi-citified, quite  
as you like;  
Moling away beneath the surface,  
Yet coming up, at intervals,  
To see the Main Chance shining in the sky;  
Holding his own, and more, against all youthful  
rivals,

## TOWARD CHILDHOOD

And shaping vigorously the grand ideals  
Which, later, were to fire his heart — and ours.

Next we deprive him of his office-stool,  
Or of his chance to labor heartily out in the sheds.  
He's but a boy at school;  
Quick, quick, with slate and pencil;  
Sharp, sharp, among the playground's crowd.

Next knee-trousers go.  
We have a child of four in laughable habiliments  
Preserved by some uncouth disciple of Daguerre,  
And later shown, in half-tones,  
For the derisive adoration of the world;  
But with a look, sly and determined, in the eyes,  
Which promises much.

Now but an infant-in-arms,  
Borne in long, convoluted skirts.  
“Oh, what a forehead!” cries a visiting aunt,  
Pushing the frilled cap back;  
And, kissing such brows, mothers have often said,  
    with awe:  
“He may be president.”

Lastly, a new-born babe  
Hugged close within a home  
On some elm-shaded street,  
Or in some slattern village farther West,  
Or in some stony cabin far beyond our bounds.  
Can we go on?

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Yes, with Wordsworth, who has Intimations,  
And who may have bestowed on him  
Long streamers of supernal — or infernal — glory;  
With Kant, who has Innate Ideas,  
And who may well have packed the baby full  
Of pre-accumulated notions and experiences;  
Or with Galton, who exploits Heredity,  
And who may have presented a complete outfit  
Of traits passed on from linked forefathers;  
Or with Taine, who comes out strongly for Environment,  
And who perhaps decreed that he should be  
Quite largely what Surroundings made him.  
Modern opinion and current fashion  
May favor this last theory still.

Thus our new-born hero came at once  
Within a range of influences and waiting opportunities  
Which caused his Life to follow  
As easily and inevitably  
As a corollary upon a theorem proved —  
As naturally as some prepotent cloud,  
Careering through the littered heavens,  
Helps weave strange, disconcerting patterns on  
earth's fields.

H'm! Are we not all clouds together? —  
Minor cirri, dumpy cumuli,  
Multitudinous shreds of vapor,

## TOWARD CHILDHOOD

Rosy or gray,  
That float or drive about in tiny tatters;  
And some fixed fault within the national sky  
Prevents a proper taming of our thunder-heads.  
We wait — and no high Cloud-Compeller comes  
To help us master our Preponderates.

## THE OUTSIDER

COULD the word but be printed  
With an extra vowel and an *accent grave*,  
Like this:  
The *Outsidère*,  
You would see at once  
That a woman was intended.  
However,  
The shortcomings of the English tongue,  
Whether we speak it or print it,  
Are serious and many —  
One can but do one's best.  
A woman, then;  
*Which* woman (one of two),  
You shall yourself decide.

Little Magda Vale was gay, but rather casual —  
One might e'en say, careless;  
For few of her associates really knew  
If she was "Miss" or "Mrs." —  
Or, indeed, whether the name she used  
Was actually hers at all.  
These associates  
Were gentlemen, and other ladies like herself.  
After a few attempts  
In the direction of society,

## THE OUTSIDER

She wisely limited her choice  
To the above.

Magda was a most merry little party —  
Diverting, good-humored, and resourceful;  
Her *oyer* always welcoming and warm.  
But why hint at a hearthstone?  
Rather should you see  
A cheery little bonfire in the dusk,  
By the gypsying roadside,  
In some small corner of the wood —  
A bonfire at whose kindly blaze  
Men who had yet no fireside of their own,  
Or who were, for the nonce,  
Far afield from such domestic feature,  
Might warm their hands and hearts,  
And so upon their way. Enough.

In one of her attempts upon society  
Magda had met with Catherine Poole.  
Catherine was thirty-three (some years the elder),  
Fortune-favored, single,  
Cold and worldly-wise.  
After the encounter, the frosted interloper  
Withdrew to other scenes, —  
Far, far; the chill spread wide.  
They never “met” a second time.

Catherine lived her days  
In a big, frigid, pompous house

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Full of folk too old.  
The presence of a widowed younger sister  
And one plaintive child  
Added to her drear environment  
Little of warmth and brightness.  
When she was some years older,  
And single still,  
She found that she had slowly faded  
To a mere stay-at-home:  
Directing the daily routine  
For scanty thanks,  
And passing through long evenings, somehow,  
With ancient, drowsy aunts and uncles.

It was dull, dull, dull.  
Young men never came,  
Except inferior clerks  
With papers from some office.  
The theaters could no more entertain;  
And picture-galleries  
Had long since been a mockery —  
Where was life's color?  
Charity, organized or not,  
Was colder than the grave;  
Books were a blank, and church was but a void.

Who shall detail the frozen hours  
That icicled her rosary?  
Though there were days when she could hug  
Her sister's child —

## THE OUTSIDER

And when, indeed, she must —  
There were more when she could not.  
There were other days  
When weddings in her street  
Would draw her curtains close  
And push her backward to the sewing-room,  
Where she would prick her fingers, bite her lips,  
And drop self-pitying tears on anything.

After some years, her very finger-tips  
Grew cold.  
Within the pallid marble monument  
That cooled her chamber  
No glow, no warming cheer,  
No flicker, even.  
And then she saw at last  
(Tho' she had seen it often)  
A fading heap of embers.  
“This must do,” she said.

She married; a “family friend” —  
Seasoned, mature, and formal,  
Of substance and position,  
Of titles and degrees.  
She was a wife of mark —  
A consort, one might even say.  
She could go anywhere;  
And now, once more, she did.

The last week of the honeymoon  
Took wife and husband

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Out to a night of dancing, lights and song —  
A “show” in a great house that welcomed all.  
The evening ended  
With shouts of numbers and with slams of doors.  
Under the canopy two women, among many,  
Stood in the flirts of snow:  
Our Catherine, regal, scornful,  
Bored, dissatisfied;  
And at her elbow, almost,  
A merry little party —  
Merry still,  
Tho’ nearing the penumbra of the days  
When cold correctness and exact reserve  
Should pay for earlier ease —  
A merry little party, as I say,  
Striking in garb  
And specious in complexion;  
Working vivacious, sparkling eyes,  
And weaving lips in patterns made to suit  
The satisfied gallant close by her side —  
Another happy soul, and not too old:  
Her husband, mayhap; mayhap not.  
At any rate, the joy of life was hers.

Well, what are rules, if one’s not in the game?  
And what are laws to one without the pale?  
And on what basis shall society  
Settle with debtor and delinquent  
Who finds the half more to her than the whole?  
Time must aid.

## THE OUTSIDER

Thus "Magda" brushed our Catherine,  
And smiled toward her attendant as she viewed  
The pottering devotion,  
*Gauche*, perfunctory,  
Of the numb-fingered husband.  
So these two:  
One, outside of life, but in society;  
The other,  
Outside society, but at the heart of life —  
Or so she fancied.  
Well, well; what do you make of this?  
"What do you make of it, yourself?"  
Perhaps you 'll ask.  
*Moi*, I have reached the end,  
And I fall silent.

## GLARE

By the time our young man  
Had reached nineteen,  
Ambition and vanity  
Called loudly for a vent.  
If he was to live —  
In any satisfying sense —  
He must climb,  
And he must make parade.  
Then, too, the need of self-expression  
(Or, at least, of self-assertion)  
May have helped torture him.  
Anyhow, he must escape;  
So, to be brief,  
He went upon the stage.

Soon he was trailing  
Behind a manager.  
Managers, rather — for they were many.  
They came and went,  
Now one and now another,  
Loose irresponsibles:  
Most of them half-optimist, half-shark;  
And with such escort  
He wove a clanking chain  
From town to town,  
With one night here, the next one there;

## GLARE

With food and sleep as they might happen,  
And proper human life  
Taking its poor chances  
Between the chinks:  
Youth's heyday jaunt,  
A lengthened jest —  
Sometimes a painful one,  
Yet still a merry.

But all his many chiefs  
In one thing were alike:  
They led him on to lavish his own self —  
His young enthusiasm,  
Hope and energy.  
He was joyously profuse,  
Spending himself before the public glare,  
While older heads,  
Illumed with lesser light,  
Told privately their takings behind the scene.  
He thought himself largely repaid  
In "opportunities"  
And in "experience."  
There was a salary, true;  
But that was little, even the leader said,  
When weighed with all the rest.

After some years of this —  
Years which he might have turned  
To better (or to different) account —  
Youth said good-bye;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

Energy abated;  
Enthusiasm waned;  
Hope, crouching low, refused to budge.  
The roseate world had gradually turned gray.  
Mere Mediocrity  
Laid hands on him,  
Grinned in his face,  
And held him in the glare  
That thousands might be bored.  
Life lost its savor,  
But he might not leave the table:  
The dishes rattled, —  
He must seem to eat.  
He was almost a failure,  
And he was doomed  
To fail in — public.  
Night after night  
Crowds came and stared  
At his predicament.  
He who but writes a book may fail —  
And no one knows;  
Whereas, an actor . . . !

At forty-one our friend  
Saw his “career” for what it was;  
Saw too that one strong wrench  
Must soon be made  
If he were ever  
To lift himself from that o'er-lighted rut  
Of non-success.

## GLARE

He knew the life — that, and none other;  
But he must take its reverse side.

He did so.

He, young, had toiled for older heads;  
Now, middle-aged, the young must toil for him.  
Thus he became a manager in turn,  
And took his toll.

Come, youth!

Come with your charm and freshness,  
Your dynamic hopes,  
Your earnestness and generosity, —  
Mixed with what lower matter there may be, —  
And heave yourself into the roaring furnace,  
Before whose maw the stoker stands,  
Mired in a pulp of shredded contracts,  
Transmuting such as you  
Into fame and profit.  
Give yourself freely;  
Yield what can never  
Be rightly recompensed.  
Yet, if you shrivel,  
Bear in mind that he must shrivel too.  
Begrimed, with sweaty brow,  
And bended back and aching arms,  
He cries out  
His own excessive hardships.  
Yet save for him, remember,  
You could not hope to flame,  
To flare, to scintillate;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

You would be  
But a dull clod of coal  
In the dim mine of home.  
Be grateful:  
Who, in this bright day,  
Would stay unlighted and unknown?  
Certes not you and I.

## THE DAY OF DANGER

WHAT day is that? you ask;  
Does not every day  
Bring its own perils?  
And yet, once past the rocks and rapids  
Of childhood, youth,  
And of adjustment to the world of men,  
May not one hope to pass out smoothly  
Into the wide, quiet waters  
Of the middle years?  
Yes, yes; you are entitled to your view —  
And I to mine.

The subject of these lines escaped  
The various dangers that attend  
One's advent in this world.  
*That* day, at least,  
Of all days the most fateful,  
Brought him no patent harm:  
So pass it by.

Succeeding days and years  
Treated him, for a time,  
With touch no less forbearing.  
As an infant in arms  
He ran the usual risks —  
And outran them.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

As a child of six or eight  
He met the usual hurdles —  
And took them handily.  
As a boy of fourteen  
He worked his way without undue mishap  
Through the high seas of yeasty adolescence.  
As a youth of eighteen,  
Neither boy nor man,  
Harried by novel passions and half-disclosed desires,  
He struggled to adjust himself as best he might  
To the Visible Framework —  
To square his new and exigent demands  
With the great Code half-seen and half-divined,  
And made no serious errors.  
When he was twenty-two,  
Love and love's concerns,  
As linked with common matrimonial intent,  
Swerved him a trifle from the way;  
But he regained his equilibrium soon  
And entered happily  
The gates of wedded life.  
At twenty-six he felt himself well-rooted  
In a material way: established in his life-work,  
And past all risk of being companied  
By Rashness and by Inexperience  
To the bankruptcy court.  
And at thirty all was well:  
A wife, a home,  
An interesting little family,  
And the respect that goes

## THE DAY OF DANGER

With a fair measure of practical success,  
Cleverly brought about.  
Nothing to do, apparently,  
But to go on as he had gone before:  
“Keeping it up”; dealing more cards in order due  
From the same flattering pack.

“No danger here; none yet,” you say.  
Nor for some years to come.  
The next five brought him little change —  
*Too little.*

Like some young tree, one that has enjoyed  
A signal period of growth and efflorescence,  
And then, despite fond hopes for growth continued,  
Stands as it is, was our poor friend.  
And when, as he was nearing thirty-eight,  
His firm became a company,  
He was made, not president,  
But merely treasurer.

Forty, forty-two, found him a fixture —  
Steady, respected and dependable.  
Loved by his wife — to a fair degree, admired.  
His children gave him  
A larger measure of regard  
Than is the wont of modern youth.  
He sat on platforms at trade conventions;  
He passed the plate at church.  
The company relied, almost unconsciously,  
On his stability — yet never could quite see

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

An increased salary. In short,  
Taken for granted; put in a place and kept there.  
'T is the harum-scarum — the man that threatens  
To fly the track, yet somehow keeps it —  
Who wins appreciation;  
And humdrum merit draws no comment  
Until it slips and fails.

At forty-five our friend sat down  
To take account of stock,  
And asked himself that fatal question:  
“Does it pay?”  
Plodding virtue,  
Calmly accepted on every side:  
Treasurer and wheelhorse at the office;  
Wheelhorse and treasurer in the home.  
Younger men were passing him  
And bearing off life's prizes;  
And daily use had made home faces dull,  
Even the dearest.  
Youth, youth encompassed him, —  
Here, as a rival,  
There, almost as a snare.  
If youth, in one form, laid a tax,  
Might he not ask it, in another,  
To bring him recompense?  
Not for much longer  
Could he count himself as young.  
Had he lived?  
Had life really satisfied him?

## THE DAY OF DANGER

Was it, as lived by him just now,  
Worth while?

For a man of his position and his age,  
There are two classic, consecrated sins:  
One may steal away from home  
In company that's disallowed,  
Severing long-clasped links,  
And setting a new young face  
In place of one long known and loved;  
Or one may steal, in bald and literal sense,  
The funds committed to one's care, and tangle up  
The fiscal world of trust and credit.  
Men there have been who, avid,  
Ambitious, stung to impatience  
Past all sight of consequences,  
And conscious that the twilight flush  
Could not much longer stay,  
Have seized on both these sins at once  
And lugged them off together —  
Breaking at the quarter-post,  
And breaking completely.  
Thus our friend:  
His day of danger came at forty-five.

Resulted from this grind of daily goodness,  
Projected through a stale and sapless future,  
An upset office and an outraged home:  
A wife shocked and affronted;  
Directors — nine — up in the air;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

A fortnight of general gossip and dismay;  
Then overtures,  
At long range and through devious channels,  
For composition and forgiveness.

His wife, benumbed,  
Had not the heart or spirit to reproach.  
His sons impatiently, yet silently,  
Cursed him for a fool.  
His daughters found it hard,  
For many a week, to look him in the face.  
His fellow-officers glazed the matter broadly,  
Displaying ostentatiously, but with due caution,  
Some specious proofs of confidence restored.  
Acceptance by the closer and the greater  
Aided the lesser and the more removed  
In their prompt search for ways and means  
By which they might adjust  
Their principles and their procedure  
To things as they had come to be;  
And all was well.

Then, for twenty years,  
A man subdued  
Walked with constraint and care  
Through scenes familiar;  
Never quite forgiven,  
Never quite trusted,  
Either through hours of work, or after.

## THE DAY OF DANGER

And when he died  
Voices were found to say:  
“Well, anyhow, he *lived* —  
He was a gay dog in his day.”  
And even sooner there were other men  
Who, when ten pickers and stealers  
Thrust themselves beyond due bounds,  
Drew slanting sanction  
(Or at least looked  
For understanding and indulgence)  
From so conspicuous and accredited a case.

More dangerous than birth,  
Or croup and scarlatina,  
Or pubescent perturbations,  
Or wild first love,  
Or earliest venturings in the world of men,  
Are the middle years —  
For one who,  
Jog-trotting faithfully through their long reaches,  
Sees pleasures and rewards fall elsewhere,  
And comes to feel  
That soon the ardent pulse of life  
Must fall, turn cold, expire.

## CHAMELEON

I PRESUME you have sometime bought  
A package of blotting-paper,  
With each sheet cut to one particular size;  
They come nine inches by four,  
And in various colors:  
White, blue, gray, yellow, pink (or red) —  
In fact, almost everything but black;  
And black, one would suppose, might easily be added.  
At any rate, I shall add it here.

Adelia Page, at nineteen, was purest white.  
She lapped up impressions of whatever sort  
And registered them with such clear-cut naïveté  
That any one could read them —  
Even a young college professor.  
Such a one she met — a nice youth of twenty-five.  
She reproduced on her immaculate surface  
All his own thoughts and views,  
And showed them back to him most candidly:  
He found her highly sympathetic and intelligent.  
He was not for books alone;  
He danced with grace and chatted pleasantly.  
He was ingenuous — as white as she.  
They found each other charming, and they paired.  
Alma mater would always care for him, of course;  
But after a while he grew a little dull.

## CHAMELEON

There were disappointments, and there was a cooling  
of early zeal:

Under the white sheet at the top was one of bluish  
gray.

The young wife noted the difference the years were  
bringing,

Said little, but grew subdued in tone herself,  
Took her color from him, and showed him  
His own sober face in hers.

Yes, alma mater was prepared to care for him  
So long as he lived and walked discreetly;  
But could not guarantee that he would live.  
In fact, he did not. He died at thirty and left behind  
A grayness greater still.

After a time the arts began to console her.

She entered a kind of decorous Bohemia,  
And here she met a painter.

By contrast with the lost one,  
He was dashing and worldly;  
He had swing, momentum, assurance.

His heart was on his sleeve —  
He spoke at their third meeting.

Yes, under the sheet of gray was one of reddish pink —  
Or pinkish red.

They married. She took in some measure her hue  
from him,

Soaked up his jargon, his *insouciance*,  
His free bohemian ways.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

The gray past vanished as they started life  
Roseately  
In a studio apartment;  
But within a year she saw his color more clearly —  
His colors, one would better say:  
Red, as a roisterer;  
As a provider, merely pink.  
The charming studio could not be maintained,  
Nor could she maintain her earlier ascendancy over  
him  
Against certain gay young creatures in his middle  
distance.  
Her own new ways, assumed and simulated  
In rivalry with theirs,  
Deceived no one, her husband least of all.  
And so they wrote together, "We must part";  
And these decisive words showed with perfect  
clearness  
Upon that scrap of indeterminate red.

She passed some years in fingering the simple tie  
That held the sheets together.  
After due deliberation she drew another:  
She wished no dull, restricted future, like her first;  
No stormy and precarious life, such as the second.  
Presently the third hope appeared.  
He shone eloquently from a large platform  
Upon a responsive audience:  
A man of wide experience, and of connections service-  
able, if not high.

## CHAMELEON

Some called him statesman; others, politician.  
He had a place and well knew how to hold it—  
Or to get another quite as good.  
He had an income, and now saw, in middle life,  
The way to make it greater.  
Within three months she had drawn another sheet  
from her packet —  
One between buff and yellow —  
And was Mrs. F. W. MacCartney,  
Wife of the Honorable Frank.

She now had a position and the means to maintain it.  
She had stagnated in life's pools;  
She had dashed through its rapids;  
And it was a comfort, at thirty-six,  
To be borne along on a wide, equably-flowing stream,  
To some definite and desirable goal —  
Washington, D.C., it appeared.  
Now and again she sat on platforms,  
And she promoted their common interests socially;  
But she declined to serve as a member  
Of the domestic committee of ways and means:  
She took unquestioningly what her husband gave.  
In later years, during a hot campaign,  
They told her plainly, as a voter and candidate,  
That she would have done well to know  
A little better whence her income came —  
A reproach which might be brought  
(Once criticism's gates are opened wide)  
Against many wives as worthy quite as she;

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

But yellow, or even buff, is a hard hue to keep clean.  
With the years her clarion-colored husband grew  
    dingy — honor rang less clear;  
And she grew careless and dingy too.  
He died suddenly, at fifty,  
After a year or two near the dome of the Capitol,  
And left her rather poor.  
Despite his later courses,  
Criticism was — restrained.  
Yet, had she been less dulled by grief,  
Or less devotedly disposed  
To hallow and idealize his memory,  
She might have seen the heavens  
As a general yellowish grime.

Very soon she took her packet again in hand  
And turned it over.  
Upon the bottom she saw an oblong bit of black.  
Long enough had she responded and reflected;  
And she had registered sensations in over-plenty.  
Black gave back no sign — black was the only wear.  
Through influence  
She became an undistinguished figure in the public  
    service,  
And wore black till she died.

## DELIQUESCENCE

We loved him;  
But he faded gradually from our sight.  
When I say, "loved him,"  
It just means —  
We liked him pretty well:  
Well enough, that is, to hold him if we could.

At what stage of his departure  
Shall I try to snatch him back  
For your attention?  
Shall it be the moment  
When he first betrayed  
His weariness and discontent  
With us, our mediocre neighborhood,  
Our unpretentious ways?  
Or when professional relations  
With the prominent and rich  
Had shown him unmistakably  
A door to finer things and higher life,  
Should he but care to use it?  
Or shall it be at that last hour  
When "society,"  
In tardy consciousness  
Of pleasant manners and of perfect taste,  
Enclasped him, whisked him through its portals,  
And shut them tight and left us sad outside?

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

When all this happened,  
He was well past thirty-four.  
The wonder only is  
It had not happened sooner.  
But Pomp and Show  
Have not the clearest eye  
For taste and merit.  
However, after some delay,  
It was agreed that no one  
Could better place a porch,  
Perform a fox-trot,  
Do exedras in gardens,  
Drape galleries with tapestries,  
Pass a cup of tea,  
Or hang long rows of lusters  
From ballroom ceilings.  
And so he left our simple street:  
He disappeared, dissolved, melted away,  
To re-crystallize  
In a more glittering environment;  
And none of us was urged  
To follow him  
To his new sphere.

Of all our little group  
None felt the deprivation  
More than his Auntie Peck  
(She was not *his* auntie; she was everybody's)  
And "Cousin" Clementine.  
For in his youth he'd been a member

## DELIQUESCENCE

Of Auntie's Bible-class;  
And in the earlier days  
Of his professional struggles  
Clementine had often asked him  
On Sunday nights to tea,  
And they had gone together  
To frugal parties, simple sociables;  
And Clementine and Auntie both  
Had worked in unison  
To make the city  
Less strange and less inhospitable  
To a nice but friendless fellow.  
“He's gone!” said Auntie Peck in tears.  
And they were left, two empty shells,  
Upon an ebb-bared shore.

Months passed. He never came  
To “take them up.”  
They lay neglected, under heaven's great dome,  
And read, at short and shortening intervals,  
Of the social doings and advances  
Of this most popular bachelor.  
The flowery path he trod  
Led him to dinners, dances, opera boxes;  
And now and then 't was noted he repaid  
This comprehensive hospitality  
By comprehensive entertainments of his own,  
At some high, well-regarded hostelry.  
“I hope he's happy,” said Auntie Peck,  
Not without bitterness.

## LINES LONG AND SHORT

And presently her bitterness increased.  
Loyalty, or policy, or some cause obscure,  
Soon brought the young Olympian  
To a wedding

Upon the edge of his old quarter;  
And Auntie Peck and Clementine,  
As family friends of early date,  
Were summoned too.

They saw him plainly 'cross the ballroom's width;  
And he — perhaps — saw them.  
But, if so, 't was in some dream,  
In some fantastic and improbable mirage.

They looked so vague he scarce could chance a bow.  
“Gone, quite!” sighed Clementine.  
For them his deliquescence was complete.

How to solidify him once again  
For a deserved revenge?

“Let all these dinner-parties and receptions,”  
Said Auntie Peck, one evening, in their parlor,  
“Lead him to the point

To which they commonly conduct a fine young  
man —

To marriage.”

“Yes,” said Clementine; “and let him marry  
Some haughty girl, within that very set,  
Who'll show him in short order  
That he is, after all, a mere outsider,  
And who will lead him such a life —”

“Yes,” said Auntie Peck; “and let her ask

## DELIQUESCENCE

For palaces, and pleasures, and esplanades,  
And tapestries, and chandeliers, and closets, closets,  
closets,

In measure twenty times beyond his power to give;  
And let him soon grow gray with worry —  
Before he's fifty, anyhow —”

“Yes,” said Clementine; “and let her love another  
man,

Younger and richer and handsomer —”

“Yes,” said Auntie Peck; “and let him find it out,  
And let them brave and taunt him,  
And let him take a pistol from a drawer,  
And hold it to his head . . .”

The doorbell buzzed.

In the bright opening

Their victim stood and smiled.

“My dear, dear boy!” sobbed Auntie Peck;

“How glad we are to see you!”

She kissed him —

And robbed him of his future.

THE END

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